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"YONDER CRAFT IS THE MAGIC SHIP!"

# The Magic Ship.

## The Magic Ship;

OR,

### The Freebooters of Sandy Hook.

A Tale of Fiction, founded upon Fact, in the History of the earlier days of New York and its adjacent waters.

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#### CHAPTER I. A STRANGE CRAFT.

"Schooner ahoy!"

The ringing hail went flying over the waters, borne by a fierce wind; but though the two vessels were not far apart, no answer was given.

"Ahoy! what schooner is that?"

Once more the stern voice rung out, and with like result, for the vessel hailed held on its way in silence, and as though no other craft was near.

"Ho that schooner! show your flag, or I fire into you!"

For a third time the stern voice was heard, and then came the answer, clear, distinct, defiant:

"I have no flag. Fire away!"

The response fairly startled those who heard it; to fling words of utter defiance, words that smacked of the free rover, right into the teeth of an armed vessel, flying the stars and stripes at its peak, and with a crew of gallant tars beneath its shadow to man its guns.

"Ready at the guns there!" came next the ominous order, and the officer in charge of the starboard battery a moment after sung out:

"All ready, sir!"

"Then make yonder impudent fellow show his colors, before it gets too dark to see what flag he floats."

"Fire!"

The deep boom of the guns, the red glare of the discharge, the shrieking of the shot, all mingled together, while the dense volumes of smoke floated to leeward, and forming into one mass, looked like a huge white cloud rolling down upon the daring vessel whose commander had told one of Uncle Sam's cruisers that she had no flag to sail under.

The two vessels were both sailing upon the same course, and the cruiser at long hailing distance to windward of the stranger.

A good twelve-knot breeze was blowing, and their course lay toward Sandy Hook, some five leagues distant.

Early in the afternoon the cruiser had sighted the stranger, and giving chase had steadily gained upon her, holding to windward the while, until just as twilight was fading she came within hail, and with a result that was far from satisfactory.

Long before she could have sent a shot into her, but the beautiful symmetry about the schooner's hull and rig had caused the naval officer to refrain from marring it, especially as the craft held on the course he wished to go, and his own vessel was steadily gaining upon her.

"She is a beauty, Lonsdale; but fast as she is the Quickstep outsails her with the same sail set," said the young captain of the cruiser, addressing his lieutenant, who stood by his side on the quarter-deck.

And both vessels were indeed models of symmetry and beauty, though the stranger craft was most peculiar in the build of her hull and rig.

Contrary to the custom of that age, she carried perpendicular masts, instead of raking ones, and aft of the mainmast there was space enough to have set a mizzen-mast.

The upright construction of her masts, as is now known, enabled her to carry more press of sail, and at a time when speed was of vital importance to hold on longer.

She was low, too, in her rigging, having, to make up for weight, tremendous booms and gaffs, which spread sail that would act upon the hull instead of as a lever aloft, which keeps a vessel constantly off an even keel.

Low in the waist, her bow and stern rose in graceful curves, which gave her a dry forecastle and quarter-deck in rough seas.

Speed had evidently been the main object aimed at in her construction, for she was of that class of vessels known as flat upon the floor, a model that gave her very little draught.

The flatness of her flooring gave her buoyancy, and her extreme length insured fleetness.

Her tonnage was a trifle under four hundred, and she was much larger than her pursuer; but then, not a gun was visible upon her decks, and the closest scrutiny of those upon the schooner had failed to detect more than a score of men upon her deck.

Yet she had the trim, taut appearance of a vessel-of-war, and there was that about her which spoke of the potent arm of stern authority to guide her destinies.

The vessel in chase was a ten-gun brig, and she presented the air of a craft under perfect discipline.

Her model was long, narrow and deep, her masts raking, and her spread of canvas immense.

She numbered seventy men for her crew, able-bodied seamen who had roughed it in all weathers, and on all sorts of allowance.

Upon the quarter-deck stood several officers near the sage old tar who was on duty at the wheel.

They were young men, all of them, and the one wearing the rank of captain was almost boyish in his appearance, yet had a handsome, resolute face that was very striking.

All the afternoon the brig-of-war Quickstep had pressed on after the strange vessel, and enjoyed the superior sailing of their fleet craft, and knowing her going qualities, wondered why the schooner had held her own as well as she did.

When the hail and response came, the guns of the Quickstep had hurled forth their iron messengers to show that she was in deadly earnest, and the dense smoke had rolled down upon the schooner, as though

to shield her from another blow from her armed adversary.

"Get ready now to give her another broadside, Mr. Lonsdale, if she has not hove to!" ordered the young commander of the Quickstep.

"Ay, ay, sir," came the cheery response, and the guns were quickly reloaded.

The brig still held on her course, the young captain intending to keep the stranger under his broadside, to see what she would do.

With straining eyes he gazed in the direction of the vessel, and failing to discern her, called out:

"Does any one see the schooner?"

No reply came, and he hailed the top:

"Ho, aloft!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the lookout in the fore cross-trees.

"Do you see the schooner?"

"No, sir; the smoke hides her," was the reply.

A moment more the brig held on, every eye on the lookout; and yet the schooner was not visible.

"The smoke of our guns has blown far beyond where she was when we fired, Mr. Lonsdale, so where is the schooner?" asked the surprised captain.

"Our broadside must have sent her to the bottom, sir," answered the lieutenant, searching the seas with his glass.

"By Neptune's beard! but it would seem so, for nowhere is she visible."

"Put the brig before the wind, and we'll chase yonder cloud of smoke, and see if it is hiding her!"

The order was quickly obeyed, the sails were squared, and away the brig darted before the wind, driving along at a pace that won the admiration of her crew.

But she was chasing a cloud, and it looked as though it would be a long chase, when suddenly the vapory mass lifted slowly from the sea, and dissolving into air revealed a vessel half a mile away, looking most phantomlike in the shadowy light that had followed the coming on of night.

"The schooner! the schooner!" shouted a score of voices, momentarily forgetting discipline.

"It is not the schooner, Lonsdale, but a full-rigged ship," assured the young commander to his lieutenant, who had been one of those who, upon discovering the vessel, had supposed it to be the chase.

"True, sir; but where is the schooner?"

"That I do not know; but yonder craft is on a course across our bows, and runs like a race-horse."

"She is doubtless a clipper out of New York, sir," said Lieutenant Lonsdale.

"Yes—but I shall bring her to, and ask if she has seen the schooner, for if it went off before the wind, hidden by the smoke from our guns, it would be now just about where the clipper is."

"Clear the port-bow gun, and throw a shot across her fore-foot!"

"Ay, ay, sir," and almost instantly the discharge of the gun came.

Again the smoke of the gun hid the vessel from sight; but only momentarily, and, as it rose, a cry broke from every voice on the vessel.

The ship was there, dashing along under a tremendous pressure of canvas, for the fierce wind that was then blowing, yet running along on almost a level keel.

But that was not all, for she was now seen to be snow-white in hull, spars and all, and over her, about her, everywhere was a weird light that seemed to smack of the supernatural.

The shot fired across her bows remained unnoticed, and distinctly revealed by the weird light about her, there was visible upon her deck but one person, and his hands were upon the wheel, and from head to foot he was clothed in white.

"Put the brig away to head her off!"

"I'll have a closer look at yonder strange craft," cried Captain Robin Sherwood, and, as the helmsman obeyed, the old gray-haired boatswain ran aft, his cap in hand, and cried excitedly:

"Your pardon, sir, your pardon; but yonder craft is the Magic Ship."

"For God's sake, sir! turn not your guns on her!"

"What do you mean it, Ratlin, that yonder craft is the strange vessel men call the Magic Ship?" cried the young captain.

"Yes, sir, for I have seen her before."

"She is schooner, brig, barque or ship, as she wants to be, and the craft that follows her after she gives her warning—"

"Her warning?"

"Yes, sir, that weird light is her warning, and the change that she made."

"What change, Ratlin?"

"From a schooner to a ship, sir."

"Do you mean to tell me yonder ship is the schooner we have been chasing?"

"I do, sir, and her warning is yonder weird light; so for God's sake, sir, don't fire on her, or we'll never reach port."

The gray-haired boatswain was a man respected by every one in the brig, and a man of undaunted courage, Robin Sherwood was surprised to see that he was so excited.

But he saw too that the excitement was contagious among his well-tried crew, who had gathered aft in a mass.

With the superstition that governed the age, and especially seamen, he felt unable himself to account for the disappearance of the schooner, the appearance of the ship just where the other craft should have been, and the weird and ghastly look of the vessel then in sight.

But he did not wish to yield without some effort to find out the mystery, so he said:

"Ratlin, I'll not fire on her, but I'll give chase, and if she can outfoot the Quickstep, then I will believe she is a magic ship."

"Crowd on all that the brig will stand, Mr. Lonsdale!"

#### CHAPTER II. RETRIBUTION.

In obedience to the command of Captain Sherwood, the Quickstep was crowded with canvas, in spite of the hard blow, and the fear that the weight of sail might carry the sticks out of her.

Beneath this tremendous pressure she fairly rushed through the waters with the wind on her starboard quarter.

The Magic Ship in the meantime was gliding along

with the wind on her port beam, and the course the two vessels were sailing must bring them together, or at least within hailing distance, before half a league was gone over.

With satring eyes all on board the Quickstep regarded the strange craft.

They saw that her hull was indeed strangely like the schooner which they had given chase to; but then they could not account for the mizzen-mast, and the addition of yards, royal top-gallant sails, square sails and all that go to make up a full-rigged ship, where before she was but a fore-and-aft schooner.

Then too her dark hull and masts had been metamorphosed into pure white, and altogether no one would have dreamed that she was the schooner so quickly changed into another class of vessel.

It soon became evident to all on the brig that the Magic Ship was outsailing the Quickstep, and this the strange schooner certainly had not done.

"She is dropping us, by the Lord Harry! and we'll pass out of hail astern of her," cried Captain Sherwood, in amazement.

"Then she must be the boatswain's Magic Ship," returned Lucas Lonsdale, half in jest, half in earnest.

"I have heard of the craft that he speaks of, Lonsdale, and she is often seen off Sandy Hook, and what she is no one has ever been able to discover."

"I would give much to solve the secret, and carry in as a prize the Magic Ship," said the young captain, in a low, earnest tone.

"Yes, sir, she was beginning to create talk when we sailed on our cruise a year ago, and the boatswain, who came out to us at Havana, with that fresh batch of sailors, has told a score of yarns in the forecastle of what is said of the weird craft of late."

"See, she is going about!"

As Lieutenant Lonsdale spoke the Magic Ship swept up into the wind, and going about as though on a pivot, laid her course almost into the very eye of the wind, and which must cause her to pass very near the brig.

"To your guns, men!" cried Captain Sherwood, in trumpet tones, not liking this move of the weird vessel.

The order was obeyed, but in a sullen kind of a way that showed the crew were not willing to fight against anything so weird as the Magic Ship.

Seeing this, Robin Sherwood called out:

"Be ready to fire if there is need, for this strange craft may intend to board us."

Then on the brig swept, plunging through the rough waters, while the Magic Ship came flying along at a terrific pace.

The weird light still hovered about her, revealing her outline as though a vail, and the closest search could not detect other than the single seaman at the wheel, though, as she went about, the crew asserted in hoarse whispers that they had seen ghostly forms spring to their posts to attend to the sails.

Nearer and nearer the two vessels drew to each other, and the silence upon the brig was painful, for not a man spoke.

Nearer and nearer, until Captain Sherwood said sternly:

"At the wheel there!

"Let her fall off a point, so as to go as near as possible."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the answer, and the wheel moved a few spokes, and the change of course pointed the brig almost directly at the Magic Ship.

"Do you see any one else on board besides the helmsman, Lonsdale?"

"No, captain," was the reply, delivered in the same low tone in which it was asked.

Nearer and nearer the brig and the ship drew to each other, until they were almost within hailing distance, and the cruiser must pass within easy pistol-shot of the other.

Then Captain Sherwood sprung upon the bulwarks and clinging to the shrouds was about to hail through his trumpet, when suddenly another form was visible upon the Magic Ship besides the helmsman.

It was a tall form, clad in a white uniform, and he sprung into the mizzen-shrouds, and before the brig's commander could hail, in a wild and piercing voice he cried:

"Ho, the brig! for God's sake pilot us into port, for we are lost, lost, lost!"

A thrill of horror went through the heart of every man upon the brig at this piteous appeal, and then into the rigging of the weird craft as if by magic, appeared scores of white-clad seamen, stretching forth their arms appealingly toward the cruiser and echoing the words:

"Lost! Lost! Lost!"

Robin Sherwood was the first to gain his presence of mind, and as the Magic Ship was sweeping by he shouted:

"Ay, ay; follow in my wake and I will lead you into port."

Hardly had the words left his lips, when from the weird seamen came a burst of demoniacal laughter.

"By Heaven! I shall follow yonder craft if devils are her crew!"

"Ready about, all!"

# The Magic Ship.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE TEMPEST.

The storm sweeping over the sea, certainly found the Quickstep unprepared to meet it, owing to its suddenly sweeping down after the flying vessel, and its ominous presence not having been discerned until the brig went about.

The Magic Ship's close proximity to the brig, had been the all-absorbing thought that filled the minds of officers and crew, and it was only when the weird craft had suddenly put about, and after the wild, piteous yell that came from the white-clad form in her shrouds, that the trailing clouds of inky blackness sweeping down upon them were seen, and their great danger realized.

Straight into the mass of foam, waters, wind and mist the Magic Ship had glided with all sail set, and seemingly without dread or damage, as appeared to the eyes of those upon the brig.

But those on the cruiser, at least most of them in their superstitious fears, seemed to feel that the storm was conjured up by the magic craft, and for the destruction of their own vessel, and the words of the boatswain, that it was a retribution upon them, found an echo in the heart of many a brave tar.

With her sails aloft and below, the Quickstep presented an obstacle to the tempest that would make her but a plaything for its fury, and this every man on board realized, and never was canvas taken in more rapidly.

But too late, alas! for the brig, caught in the howling winds, was hurled upon her beam-ends, and a score of poor fellows, torn from her rigging, were carried off to die in the mighty torrents.

Upon the decks fell mountains of water, and in the terrific roar even the trumpet tones of her commander could not be heard, the winds blowing his orders back in his teeth.

In vain was every effort, that could be made, undertaken to right the vessel; but the seas and winds still pressed her over, while there remained but one alternative to save her, and in ringing tones the order was given:

"Axes, ho! cut away the masts!"

The men sprung to obey, as their only hope, and, lashed to the weather bulwarks, they began their work, and quick and sharp the blows fell.

A few minutes of fearful suspense, drowned by seas that swept over the ill-fated craft, and the crashing and cracking of timbers was heard, and then with a mighty noise the masts and their rigging went over the side, the parting ropes snapping like volleys of musketry.

But above the roar and confusion resounded a cry for help, and it was from the lips of a young middy who had been caught in the wreckage.

He was a daring, handsome boy, and a favorite with his young commander, who would not see him die without an effort to save him.

He saw that the middy was entangled in a mass of rigging, and that the wreckage had not wholly broken loose from the vessel, and still held her heeled over.

"Here, lads! make fast this line!" shouted Captain Sherwood, and with one end around his waist, and the other held by half a dozen willing hands he sprung out upon the raft of rails, spars and rigging, and followed by a cheer from his men reached the lad.

To free him was but the work of an instant, and instantly the rope was made fast about him, in spite of the remonstrances of the brave youth.

"Haul him in lively, lads!"

The order was given coolly, and the men drew the middy toward the vessel, he carefully picking his way, while his gallant rescuer followed closely behind.

But suddenly a fiercer wave swept over the brig, the loud cracking of ropes followed, and, amid a wild shout of alarm from half a hundred throats, the wreck was torn away from the hull.

The brig, relieved of the pressure, reeled back, and went over so far that it seemed as though she must capsize; but she righted to a level keel, just as the midshipman was drawn over upon her decks.

But her brave commander was being borne away upon the tempest-swept waters, and back to the ears of his sorrowing crew came his plucky cry:

"Good-by, lads!"

"Ho, men! the captain shall not die!

"Who will pull a boat with me in this sea?"

It was Lucas Lonsdale who sprung nobly to the front to save his commander, and in spite of the death that stared the mad attempt in the face, a score of hoarse voices answered:

"Ay, ay, sir, we are ready!"

But there was not a boat that could be launched, for a search showed that all were stove, and with sad hearts they had to leave the noble young leader to his fate, and secure themselves as best they could from being swept into the seas, as the wreck was constantly boarded by terrific waves, although the force of the tempest seemed spent.

"Pardon me, Lieutenant Lonsdale; but might not minute-guns bring some vessel to our aid, and the wreckage might be found, sir, and the captain saved?"

It was Park Pelham, the rescued middy, who asked the question, and his voice trembled as he did so, for he dearly loved his commander.

"By Neptune! Pelham, you are right, and I thank you for the suggestion."

"Clear away that lee gun there, and let its brazen throat cry for help!" answered Lieutenant Lonsdale.

"Ay, ay, sir," and the middy gladly sprung to obey the order, and in a few moments the deep boom of the cannon burst forth over the storm-swept waters, loudly appealing for aid from some brave vessel which had not, as the brig had, become a wreck upon the sea.

Deeper and deeper, more earnest and pleading, it seemed to the anxious crew, the minute-guns pealed forth, while the staunch hull was driven by wind and wave toward the land, yet some distance off, but to be dreaded greatly as the hours went by.

Suddenly an answering peal came to the brazen call for help, and many eyes saw the distant flash. Was it a flash of lightning, from the dark clouds drifting away in the distance?

Was the roar but the muttering of dying thunder?

All breathlessly waited to see, and a glad shout

broke from the crew as again the red glare illuminated the sea, and once more the deep-toned notes of a gun were heard.

"Fire again, Midshipman Pelham!" called out Lieutenant Lonsdale, and instantly the heavy gun of the Quickstep shook the hull in the discharge.

"It may be that it is a craft like ourselves in distress, and firing minute-guns for aid," said Lucas Lonsdale to a brother officer.

"Perhaps so, sir; but I believe the guns were fired to make us fire again and show where we are, as the vessel is to windward of us, and may not have seen the flashes from our lee ports," answered the officer.

"So it would seem, as she has not fired again.

"Keep your weather eyes open, lads, and report the first sign of a vessel!"

"Ay, ay, sir," came from the crew, gathered amidships, and every eye was strained to catch a sight of the hoped-for vessel.

Long and anxiously they waited, and Lieutenant Lonsdale had just given the order to fire again, when Midshipman Pelham sung out in his clear tenor voice:

"Sail, ho!"

"Whereaway, Pelham?" called out Lieutenant Lonsdale.

"Directly abeam, sir, and coming down upon us with a rush before the wind."

"Ay, ay; I see her."

"It is a schooner running wing and wing, and with more sail set than I would care to carry in this blow."

"Wave that lantern, boatswain, and let them see where we are!"

"Ay, ay, sir," and the sturdy old boatswain swung the battle-lantern round and round his head.

But if seen on board the stranger, it was not noticed, and right on her course came the vessel.

"It is a large schooner and a three-master."

"A strange rig for these waters," said a junior lieutenant, addressing his superior.

"Yes; and by Heaven! if he does not alter his course he will cut us in two."

"My trumpet, boy!"

A cabin-boy handed the silver trumpet to the lieutenant, and loud and piercing rung forth his hail:

"Schooner, ahoy! ahoy!"

No response came, and again the officer hailed.

Still no reply.

"Schooner, ahoy! Starboard your helm, or you will cut us in two!"

The words were fairly shrieked forth, and breathlessly every man on the wrecked brig awaited the result.

"God have mercy! they will run us down!" cried Lieutenant Lonsdale, realizing that a few moments more must bring the crash.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MIDSHIPMAN'S THREAT.

UNHEEDING the brig in her course, and her own danger, the strange vessel came on, until a sudden thought flashed through the brain of Lieutenant Lonsdale.

"Cut loose that gun from its lashings, and fire into yonder craft!" he shouted, as the idea struck him of waking up the schooner's crew in that violent manner.

A cheer from the men showed that the order heartily met their approbation, and the gun on the weather broadside, for the hull was drifting broadside to the gale, was cleared for action.

But suddenly the sharp bows of the schooner swept round like lightning, the mainsail jibed over with a savage jerk that threatened to pull her mast out of her, and the vessel was brought with her head almost into the wind with a skill that was remarkable in such a sea and blow.

There was no light visible on board of her, and she was a long craft, with three immense sails and a jib set.

As she moved away, eating up into the wind, a murmur of disappointment arose among the brig's crew, for they believed that they were to be deserted; but the quick eye of Park Pelham had caught sight of a dark object upon the water, and he called out cheerily:

"Boat, ho!"

"See! they are sending a boat aboard of us!"

"By Jupiter! but you are right, Pelham, and in a sea that would swamp a life-boat," answered Lieutenant Lonsdale, and all anxiously watched the coming boat.

It was a long boat with a dozen oarsmen, and came through the rough waters guided by a master hand, and pulled by daring tars, ready to risk life, brave death themselves to save others.

Nearer and nearer it came until when almost upon the wreck, it was rounded to, and a tall form standing up in the stern skillfully threw upon the quarter-deck a coil of rope.

"Ay, ay; thank you, sir; but it will take a stout cable to tow us in this sea, if that is your intention," called out Lucas Lonsdale.

But no reply was made by the officer in the boat, and the lieutenant continued, addressing his men:

"Lively, lads, carry this rope forward and make it fast!"

Just then a second coil was thrown, and fell upon the brig's deck.

"Bravo! carry that line forward also, and make fast," called out the lieutenant, and then turning once more to the boat he said:

"Ho, in the boat, there!"

"You had better come on board than attempt a pull back to your vessel in this sea."

But the boat was already moving away, now on the top of a huge wave, now in the hollow of the sea, bounding, crouching, seeming to sink, yet urged on by her brave and powerful oarsmen.

"See the schooner!"

It was Boatswain Ratlin that uttered the words, and he pointed out over the darkness to where the three-masted schooner was now plainly seen just to windward, and hardly two lengths away.

Unnoticed by those who had been watching the boat and her gallant crew, she had drifted nearer, and now was lying to.

Not a light was visible on board of her, and there

was something strangely grim about her as she lay there, sending a boat through fearful danger to aid those whose hail she had not answered.

Then it came to all how silent had been those who came in the boat, the officer uttering no word in reply to Lieutenant Lonsdale, and after throwing the line on board, rowing back in silence to his vessel.

But the lines had been safely carried to the wreck, and in spite of the silent humor of the strange craft's commander, Lucas Lonsdale determined to make use of them, and quickly ordered the stout cables to which they were attached to be hauled in and made fast.

Nimbly the men sprung to the work and before very long the two stout cables were made fast, and the lieutenant again hailed:

"Ho, the schooner!"

"All fast!"

All listened with breathless eagerness for the reply.

But none came, though every eye beheld the large schooner fall off until her sails filled, and then move slowly forward, but held so close in the wind that the headway she had would not jerk too heavily upon the cables when they became taut.

In silence the crew of the dismantled brig awaited to know the result, as to whether the tow-lines would part, or stand the immense pressure they would have upon them.

At length the pull came, and the shock was a severe one, skillfully handled as was the schooner.

But the cables held firm, the sharp bows of the brig were dragged out of the trough of the sea, and round until she felt the gale astern, and then, throwing her sails wing and wing, the strange craft bounded away before the tempest, towing the wreck at a speed that was marvelous.

"Ho there, boatswain, what means those men crowding aft?" suddenly cried Lieutenant Lonsdale, as the boatswain stepped into the full glare of two battle-lanterns lashed to guns upon either side, and at his back stood the entire crew.

"It means, lieutenant, that the men want to speak to you, sir," said the boatswain, firmly, but with a salute.

"Well, what have they to say that is so urgent that they crowd the quarter-deck at such a time?" asked the officer, sternly.

"They want to ask, sir, if you noticed the craft ahead particularly, sir?"

"Yes, and what then?"

"Lieutenant, do you know what vessel it is, sir?"

"No."

"Do you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what craft is it?"

"She did not answer your hail, sir?"

"No."

"Nor did the officer in the boat?"

"No, boatswain; but their rudeness is overbalanced by the service they are doing us."

"You wanted the craft to cruise in search of the wreckage with the captain on it, sir?"

"Yes, until soundings told me I was too near land, and that I must look to the safety of the brig and crew, sad as it is to leave Captain Sherwood to his fate.

"Now go forward, men, and let me have no more of this questioning."

"One moment, lieutenant, while I tell you, sir, what we know," urged the boatswain, earnestly.

"Well, boatswain?" and the lieutenant spoke with some impatience.

"The lads noticed, sir, that yonder craft did not answer our hail, that not a light was visible on board, there was not the slightest sound of a creaking block or a fluttering sail as she put about, and—"

"Bah! the howling of the tempest would drown all sounds."

"No, sir."

"Speak out, man, and tell me what all this means?" angrily said Lucas Lonsdale.

"It means, sir, that we are being towed by the Magic Ship!" was the low, earnest reply of the boatswain, pointing as he spoke to the weird craft ahead.

In spite of his nerve Lucas Lonsdale started at these ominous words, and the officers gathered about him also stood as if horror-struck.

But the lieutenant said quickly:

"Nonsense, boatswain; that weird craft was a full-rigged ship, while yonder vessel is a three-masted schooner."

"The craft that we chased before night, sir, was a two-masted schooner, and changed into a full-rigger, and now she has changed into a three-masted."

"

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He hated to yield, but there was no alternative, and he was about to do so, when a low voice cried behind him:

"Stand as de, all!"

Quickly he looked around, and beheld Park Pelham, the daring young middy, standing at the breech of the stern pivot-gun, a forty-two-pounder.

The muzzle was pointed forward, and directly upon the crew, in his right hand the midshipman held a lighted port-fire, and in his left, above his head, a battle-lantern, while in a voice that reached every ear he cried:

"Down upon your faces every mutinous dog of you, for be that the Magic Ship or not, obey, or I send your souls to perdition!"

## CHAPTER V.

### THE WEIRD PILOT.

The bold act of Midshipman Park Pelham, to quell the mutinous spirit engendered by the superstitious fears of the crew, against the vessel which they asserted was towing the brig to destruction and them to death, was a thrilling surprise to one and all, from Lieutenant Lonsdale to the smallest cabin-boy on board the wreck.

The middy was a natural-born sailor, as fearless as a lion, and one whose presence of mind did not desert him in the direst danger.

When washed overboard with the wreck, his piercing cry, that had been heard and heeded by his captain, had been more a warning to show what had happened to him than a call for aid, or an utterance of fear.

Had he not been entangled in the rigging, he might have regained the brig without aid, and had he for an instant felt that Captain Sherwood would not reach the wreck with him, he would rather have died than see him carried off before his eyes.

It was a fearful blow to him, and only in busiest action could he keep from before his vision the tall form of his commander and friend, borne away upon the wreckage, and drown the farewell words of the brave man, which kept continually ringing in his ears.

When the men came aft, after the brig was in tow of the craft, which they asserted was the Magic Ship, the young midshipman felt that there would be trouble, and remembering that the stern pivot-guns were double-loaded with grape, and seeing that its muzzle was pointed so as to fully command the length of the brig, he quickly secured a port-fire and lantern and calmly waited, without even attracting the attention of the officer who stood nearest to him.

Then, at the moment when the mutinous spirit held the power, and he saw that Lieutenant Lonsdale must yield to the crew, as the only course open to him, his ringing words and fearful threat fell upon their ears.

For one instant of horror the men gazed upon him, and the officers, springing aside from near the threatening muzzle of the pivot-gun, also looked upon him in amazement and admiration commingled.

"Down upon your faces, every man of you, or I fire!"

Again his voice rang above the roar of wind and waters, and the port-fire was thrust nearer the priming-tube.

Every eye was now upon that pale, resolute young face, and all read there that Midshipman Park Pelham would keep his word.

The lantern, held above his head, revealed set determination to carry out his threat, and, as though intending to give no other warning, he thrust the port-fire in dangerous proximity to the priming-tube, as with one accord, every man of the three-score dropped upon his face, flat upon the deck.

As though disdaining to follow up the advantage which his courage and promptness had gained, the middy turned to his superior officer, and said politely, and with an air of one who had just executed an order given him:

"The mutiny is quelled, sir.

"Shall I put the men in irons, Lieutenant Lonsdale?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Pelham; but they must go below decks, and have the hatches closed on them until we reach port," and Lucas Lonsdale spoke to the midshipman with a respect which he would have shown to a superior.

"Ay, ay, sir," and then in his clarion-like tones he called out:

"Ho, there, lads, a dozen of you get below decks, and do not stop to let the barnacles grow upon your feet while going!"

Silently the men furthest forward arose and hastened to the forecastle, down which they disappeared with commendable rapidity.

"Ho, there! the next squad start on the same cruise!" sung out the middy, cheerily, and in obedience a dozen more made all haste to get below decks.

Then followed another group, and another, until Boatswain Ratlin and those immediately aft were ordered down below, and as promptly obeyed as had their messmates.

"All down, sir!" and the middy saluted, and then running forward with several other young officers, quickly secured the hatches.

And thus, in the darkness and storm, with her crew imprisoned below decks, her officers, and the two men at the wheel, grouped together on the quarter-deck, the dismantled brig was dragged through the wild waters, plunging, rolling, riding a mighty wave one instant, to forge through another the next, and the vessel which led her, if not the same craft which twice before had crossed her path that night, was certainly a weird pilot, forging silent and somber upon her course.

Below decks the crew waited in silence, dreading the worst, and in total darkness, only knowing by the movement of the vessel that she was still being dragged onward.

Upon the quarter-deck the group of officers stood, watching, waiting, and talking in low, earnest tones, until once more the middy's voice was heard, and in the cheerful cry:

"Light, ho!"

"Whereaway, Pelham?" asked Lieutenant Lonsdale, quickly.

"Just off our port bow, sir."

"Ay, ay, I see it!"

"It is the light on Sandy Hook Point, and we are saved."

And on still the wreck was dragged, until the light loomed up brightly through the intense darkness which was so dense that the strange craft ahead could only be traced in the dimmest outline.

At length the light shone off the port beam, then was seen on the stern quarter, and half an hour after the dismantled brig ceased to plunge through the wild waters, but glided along under the lee of Sandy Hook, until suddenly her forward motion seemed to cease.

"Holy Neptune! the crew have escaped!" suddenly cried Park Pelham, and he again sprung to the gun, and seizing the port-fire thrust the end into the lantern to ignite it.

"Back to your den, you sea-dogs!" he shouted.

But all was silent forward, and no moving form was seen.

"Did you see any one forward, Pelham?" asked Lieutenant Lonsdale, peering into the gloom ahead.

"I certainly did, sir.

"I saw two forms distinctly, and they were moving in a crouching attitude, one to starboard, the other to port.

"I will go forward and see if I could be mistaken," said the plucky middy.

"And I will accompany you," answered Lieutenant Lonsdale, and the two went forward together, their swords drawn, and pistols held ready for use.

But the hatches were found as they had left them, and certainly none of the crew could have come on deck.

"You were mistaken, Pelham," said Lucas Lonsdale.

"No, sir, I was not!

"See here!"

The middy, as he spoke, pointed at the deck.

"Well?"

"The cables, by which the craft ahead was towing us have—"

"Been cut, as I live!" exclaimed the lieutenant.

"No, sir, they were not cut, or the ends made fast to us would still be here.

"They have been let go."

"By Heaven! you are right."

"And who has done this?"

"Those two forms I saw, and they came from the three-master, sir."

"You are right, for we are now not moving, and the water here is as placid as a lake."

"But where is the three-master?"

The words had scarcely left the lips of the lieutenant when a weird light was visible off on the starboard bow, and there, not two cables' length away, was visible the three-masted schooner.

It certainly looked like their strange pilot, and yet, her hull was now white, her masts and spars of the same hue, and her solitary helmsman was at the wheel, and clad in the same ghostly-looking apparel in which he had before been seen.

"The Magic Ship!" exclaimed Lucas Lonsdale through his shut teeth.

"Yes, sir, and old Ratlin, the boatswain, was right, for she has towed us into port."

"See, sir! she heads in toward us."

The same weird light, before seen, revealed the vessel as she came forward under a tremendous pressure of canvas, and her course lay directly for the dismantled brig.

"Can she mean to run us down?" cried Lieutenant Lonsdale, and he added:

"We are powerless to prevent."

"No, sir, for that ghostly-looking helmsman is putting his wheel to starboard now," and as the bows of the schooner fell off from their course, for she had been sailing almost into the wind's eye, a white-clad form once more appeared in the Mizzen shrouds, and there followed the pitiful hail:

"Wreck ho!"

"For God's sake tell us how to reach port, for we sold our craft to Satan, and are lost! lost! lost!"

"Starboard your helm hard-down and hold due north for the New York Narrows!" shouted Lucas Lonsdale, springing upon a gun, and steady him self with his sword upon the bulwarks.

"Ha! hal hal!" and a chorus of demoniacal laughter broke forth from on board the weird craft, as she sped on, laying her course east by north, which would carry her out to sea, to again face the fury of the winds and waves without the Hook.

"Turn out the men, Mr. Pelham, and we'll let fall the anchors, and lie here until morning," said Lucas Lonsdale, not knowing what to say or think of what he had seen and heard.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"All hands on deck!" called out the middy, opening the hatches, and the crew came up sullen and silent.

Instantly they cast their eyes about them; but the weird pilot had already disappeared, and determined not to give them time to plan mischief Lieutenant Lonsdale said:

"Well, lads, we are safe inside of Sandy Hook, so let fall the anchors and we'll ride here until morning."

"Ay, ay, sir; and I begs pardon for myself and the men, sir, for what we did; but the craft that towed us in did look uncommon like the Magic Ship," said Boatswain Ratlin.

"I grant that she did, boatswain, but we are safe here now, and will go up to the city in the morning, so I'll say no more about it, lads."

A cheer burst forth for the lieutenant, who walked aft with the middy, who remarked:

"I am glad, sir, that they did not know that our pilot was really the Magic Ship."

"The secret will soon leak out, Pelham, and when I make my report, I am going to ask leave to go on a cruise for that craft, weird as she appears."

"And ask that I may be ordered to accompany you, sir."

"I will, Pelham, for you are one among a thousand," was the complimentary reply, as the two rejoined those they had left upon the quarter-deck, and who had seen with horror that their pilot had been indeed the Magic Ship.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE HERMIT OF THE HIGHLANDS.

A few of the "oldest inhabitants" of what is now known as the Highlands of Neversink\* still remember an old Hermit, who dwelt in a half-log, half-

cavern abode upon the bold point of land which overlooks the beautiful lower bay of New York, and commands a view to seaward of many leagues, and up and down the coast for miles.

To those unacquainted with the locality, I will say that the hill juts out into New York's lower bay, is bold and rugged, and was then, at the time of which I write, covered with a dense growth of timber.

Inland its view sweeps over a vast expanse of land and water, including Staten Island, and it is separated from the narrow, sandy neck of land which runs down from Long Branch, New Jersey, and terminates in Sandy Hook, by the Shrewsbury river, which is formed by the two streams, or inlets, known as the North and South Shrewsbury.

For scenes of romance in the past, for deeds of piracy, smuggling, and as a haunt of free rovers, no spot on the American coast, a century ago, was more noted than Sandy Hook and its surroundings, and many a thrilling tale of the sea and shore has been written of that locality, with more truth than fiction for its foundation.

The Hermit who made his abode upon the Highlands came from none knew where, and was an object of dread to the few farmers dwelling inland a league or so, and to the hamlet of fishermen situated in a sheltered nook on the shores of the lower bay.

With his fellow-mortals, 'twas said, the Hermit had naught to do, unless I except the family of the light-house keeper on Sandy Hook.

In that lonely abode dwelt a widow and her daughter, who, since the death of her husband, years before, had faithfully attended to the lantern through nights of storm and calm.

Alone the mother and daughter dwelt there, and over the waters of the bay the young girl was daily seen gliding in her tiny sail-boat, or, armed with a small gun, scouring the woods of the Highlands for game.

Fear she seemed not to know, and one day she had come upon the old Hermit, lying at the foot of a precipice with a broken leg.

She had aided him to his humble home, and made him most comfortable, and then had gone miles away for a doctor.

The surgeon had set the leg, and had then been paid most liberally in gold by the Hermit, who promptly told him his services were not again needed.

But from that day the young girl became a frequent visitor at the Hermit's home, and cared for him as tenderly as though he had been her own father.

The doctor told his story of his visit to the Hermit, and that Light-house Lily, as the young girl was called, had saved his life, and the humble fishermen wondered, when they saw the maiden scudding across the bay on her daily visits to the strange man, that she did not fear him, for it was whispered around among the superstitious dwellers of that lonely region that he was a wizard, and leagued with Satan, and they shook their heads when they thought that he might use his black art upon the poor girl to darken her future life.

The morning after the storm which made a wreck of the brig-of-war Quickstep, the old Hermit came out of his cabin and glanced around him over the waters of the lower bay.

He was a man of majestic appearance, over six feet in height, with a form erect and strong, while his hair and beard were white as snow, the former falling to his waist, and the latter reaching far below his belt.

He was dressed in a suit of black, wore boots, into the tops of which his pants were stuck, and his head was sheltered by a broad-brimmed sombrero that had evidently come from Mexico.

His eyes were black as night, full of fire and fierce-looking, and his complexion was bronzed, as though by long exposure to the elements, to the hue of an Indian.

In his belt he wore two large pistols and a long knife, and in his hand he carried a crook, around the upper end of which was coiled a large snake, alive and vicious-looking.

After a glance over the bay, the Hermit wended his steps up to the summit of the Highlands and soon stopped at a large rock, his favorite resting-place, and from whence he had a grand view of the ocean, and up and down the coast.

Laying down his crook, the snake crawled away over the soft grass, apparently enjoying its freedom, while his master's eye roved up and down the shores, and in a deep voice, he muttered:

"No wrecks that I can see, though yonder vessel was swept of her masts."

"But how did she get into the Hook haven, for she has no jury-masts rigged, for they are now at work upon them."

"A vessel-of-war, too, I see!"

"Well, had she gone ashore, her bones would have been hardly worth the picking, for it is gold and silver, not iron and wood that I want—ay, and shall one day have them."

"Ah! there comes the girl and they are hauling her from the wreck."

"Now she comes on, and will soon be here, and then I will know what word the boy left for me last night, when he ran in and landed."

"Strange that he did not visit me; but I suppose he was after some game that hastened him away."

"The girl comes up the river, instead of by the bay shore, so I will meet her."

"Come, Satan!"

The last call was to the snake, who came rapidly crawling out of the bushes near by, and coiling himself around the crook, was taken up by the old Hermit, who slowly descended the steep hillside toward the Shrewsbury river.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE

while it could be urged forward easily with oars, and had rowlocks for four blades.

Its occupant had come from the light-house, and was a maiden of seventeen.

She wore a jaunty suit of sailor-blue, the skirt falling to the top of her gaiters, which were fine enough for a lady of fashion, and small and shapely enough to make a New York belle envious.

A glazed tarpaulin sheltered a mass of golden curls that fell far down her back.

Her form was willowy, and her every motion graceful, while her face was beautiful, full of pride and spirit, and a wonderful power of fascination dwelt in her dark eyes, which were dreamy in repose and burned like diamonds in excitement.

She had hoisted her little sail, seated herself in the stern, and with her small, nut-brown hand resting upon the tiller, had headed her craft for the foot of the Highlands.

She gazed wonderingly upon the dismasted brig as she lay at anchor, the crew busy in rigging jury-masts and sails, with which to go up to the city anchorage, and unconsciously steered close in toward the Quickstep, unmindful that admiring glances were turned upon her.

As she drew near, Lieutenant Lonsdale said to Park Pelham, the middy:

"Hail her, Pelham, and ask if she will run over to the fishing-hamlet and send a party to search the coast below for poor Sherwood's body, and say that I will pay a handsome sum for its recovery."

"Ay, ay, sir; and so will I, for it would be a great comfort to his mother to be able to bury him in the family tomb, and know that he was not at the bottom of the sea," answered the middy, with deep feeling.

Then raising his voice, and at the same time politely lifting his hat, he hailed:

"Surf-skiff, ahoy!"

"Ay, ay, sir," was the prompt response, in a voice full of music.

"Will you kindly steer nearer the brig, miss?" and the middy wholly doffed his cap.

The request was obeyed, and as the little skiff was luffed up only a short distance away, Lieutenant Lonsdale stepped to the side and said politely, for there was that in the air of the girl that commanded respect, although they believed her to be but a fisherman's daughter:

"Your pardon, miss, for hailing you; but we were caught in the storm last night, and lost our masts, as you see, while our captain went adrift in the wreckage, and I beg that you will ask the fishermen in yonder hamlet to search for his body and bring it to the city."

"Tell them to come to the brig-of-war Quickstep, and they shall be most liberally rewarded, if they find the body."

"I will tell them, sir, and if the body washes ashore they will doubtless find it," and with a smile and a bow the maiden held on her way past the brig, while her ears caught the remark of Lucas Lonsdale:

"By Neptune's beard, Pelham! but that is the loveliest face I ever beheld."

"And she has the loveliest voice I ever heard, sir," was the response of the middy, and which was also overheard by the young girl, whose face became crimson at the compliment.

Instead of heading for the fishing-hamlet, two leagues up the bay shore, the maiden held on up the Shrewsbury river, and ran in to a landing where stood the Hermit of the Highlands awaiting her.

"Well, how is the Lily of the Light-house to-day?" asked the Hermit Wizard, with a smile, which lit up his dark, stern face, unmellowed by the white hair and beard, like sunlight upon a storm-cloud.

"I am well, sir; but it was a fearful night for poor seamen, and I can never sleep when I feel the light-house trembling under the fury of the storm, and know how many ships are battling with it," she answered, with feeling.

"There lies one that seems to have gotten the worst of the battle," the Hermit said, pointing to the brig, a league distant, and with a look upon his face that held no sympathy for the brave craft or her crew.

"Yes, sir, and she lost her captain, they told me as I came by."

"Indeed! do you know the name of the craft?" he asked, quickly.

"The brig-of-war Quickstep."

"Ha! she was commanded by Robin Sherwood, a young and dashing officer, and she was the fleetest cruiser in the navy."

"Doubtless, for the Sherwoods are a rich family."

"Well, you had better go to the hamlet and tell some of those fellows to make search for the body; but warn them, my child, not to remain after sunset upon the beach, as the Hermit Wizard claims this shore as his own after nightfall."

"I will tell them, sir, and I will go over the hill to their village, leaving my boat here."

"It will be the easier way, as the tide would be against you now."

"But what message have you for me?"

"None, sir."

"From the captain, I mean."

"I have none, sir."

"You saw him last night?" said the Hermit, with a look of surprise.

"No, sir, not since his vessel last ran into this instant."

"Why, my child, the craft was in the Hook haven last night, and I certainly thought he had gone to the light-house and left some word for me."

"No, sir, I did not see Captain Gray, nor did I know that it was in the haven," and the maiden seemed greatly surprised.

"I came out of my cabin about midnight, for the fierce storm awoke me, and looking over toward the Hook I saw the craft distinctly."

"She seemed to have just run out of the light-house anchorage, and was heading out to sea."

"Are you sure that it was the ship, sir?" asked the maiden, with increased surprise.

"Most certainly, for I cannot be mistaken in the vessel, especially when she had her spectral light burning brightly, and was under her white rig."

"It is strange, sir."

"I hope she did not go down in the fierce blow," and a cloud passed over the lovely face.

"No danger, child, for that craft will never go down at sea."

"No, no; Satan holds her in his keeping, and no storm that ever swept the seas can wreck her."

The Hermit spoke with an impressiveness that awed the young girl, although his words seemed to shock her, and she said quickly:

"I will go to the hamlet now, sir, and follow the shore to the path over the hills."

"There is a basket in my boat, sir, of things my mother sent you."

"Your mother is too good to me, my child, and so are you, for I do not deserve it, I do not deserve it," and the man's face seemed momentarily swept by sadness.

"You are so kind to me, sir, and to mother, for you have given me so many pretty things to wear."

"You deserve all you receive at my hands, for I would have died yonder under the cliff the day I fell and broke my leg, but for you, as the tide was rising rapidly, and I would soon have been drowned, as I was powerless to move."

"No, no, girl, you saved my life, and all I ask is that you will let me be kind to you in my own way."

"Now go after the fishermen, but warn them not to let sunset catch them upon the beach, or near my home," and so saying the Hermit strode up the hill, while the maiden went her way along the shore at its base.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### HOPE AND DESPAIR.

AFTER a walk of half a mile along the bank of the Shrewsbury, the Lily of the Light-house came to a path that led up over the hills, and which she knew would lead her to the village of the fishermen.

Long before it had been the way the fishermen came to the river, where their boats were, and crossing, would carry them over to the sea, and spend a day in fishing in deep water; but the coming of the Hermit to the Highlands had caused them to prefer to ply their calling in the bay, rather than risk meeting that dreaded personage in going over the hills.

Thus the path had long been in disuse, though now and then a straggling huntsman from the farms above might follow it, and occasionally Lily had gone that way to the village.

As she ascended the hillside she turned and glanced out upon the sea, when suddenly her eyes fell upon a dark object upon the waters.

For a moment she watched it closely, and then taking from its place at her belt, a small pocket spy-glass, she turned it upon the object, which the wind and the tide were slowly bringing shoreward.

Quickly closing the glass and again hooking it to her belt, she started rapidly down the hill, and gaining the bank of the river, ran fleetly along it in the direction of her boat.

Springing into it, she lowered the little sail, for the wind was against her, and seizing the oars sent the light skiff flying across the river, and soon grounded upon the neck of land that forms Sandy Hook.

Throwing out her light anchor, to keep her boat from drifting away with the incoming tide, the young girl hastily ran over the neck of land and soon stood upon the broad beach of the Atlantic, upon which the breakers fell with thunderous roar, for huge waves were rolling landward with fury, the effect of the storm of the night before.

There, not a cable's length distant, was the dark object which had attracted her attention, and the waves must soon dash it upon the beach.

Now, by the naked eye it was plainly seen to be a mass of wreckage, masts, spars, sails and rigging, and clinging to it was a human being.

The rude waves tossed the *débris* about with seemingly malicious delight in the attempt to break loose the hold upon it of the one who clung there for life; but he held on with a grip that was hard to shake off, and when once or twice broken, he soon managed to get a clutch once more ere strength failed him.

At length, as the wreckage neared the beach, the man raised his head and glanced shoreward long and earnestly.

To go ashore with that mass of timber, and be tossed about by the breakers, meant certain death, he knew, and he felt that his only course was to leave that to which he had clung, and try and gain the beach at another point by swimming.

But he hesitated, for his strength was almost gone.

"Leave the wreckage and swim ashore!"

The man started as the clear voice fell upon his ears, and gazed earnestly shoreward.

But his eyes were too dimmed by the salt spray for him to see the one who thus called out to him.

"Quick! or it will be too late."

"Leave the wreckage and swim ashore at another point!"

The voice sounded sweet in spite of its almost stern command, and buoyed up with hope he obeyed.

Struggling out of the mass of wreckage he struck out boldly up the beach, anxious to get clear of the tossing spars when they should be drawn into the breakers and hurled upon the beach.

In this act he was not a moment too soon, for hardly had he gotten wholly clear of the *débris* when the mass was seized by the surf and dragged upon the beach with a fury that snapped stout spars, tore sails into fragments, and snapped strong ropes as though they had been threads.

Had he been in that writhing wreckage he would have been crushed out of all human semblance in an instant.

But, free of it, he swam up the beach for a short distance, and then his strength failed him, and he seemed dazed, for he turned seaward.

"Ho! this way!"

The voice reassured him, and he set his face shoreward; but it was evident that human nature had been taxed beyond endurance, for the waves tossed him about at will, when within hail of safety, and the strong arms could no longer battle for life.

"Oh, God! I must die, after all these long hours of struggle, and life within my grasp!"

The words came from his lips with a gasp, and his arms sunk helplessly to his side.

"Have courage! I will save you!"

The wave-deafened ears heard the ringing words, and the spray-blinded eyes tried to see who it was that bade him hope.

"Great God, it is a woman!"

"Go back! go back! and leave me to my fate!"

He fairly shrieked the words, and then his strength seemed utterly gone from him, for a huge wave passed over him, crushing him far down beneath its crested top.

#### CHAPTER IX.

##### THE RESCUE.

WHEN the Lily of the Light-house reached the beach, she saw that the man clinging to the wreckage was evidently in pain and almost worn out.

If he came ashore in the midst of the *débris*, she knew it would kill him, and hence she called to him to leave it and strike out for the beach at a point above.

His actions told her that it was almost impossible for him to hold up a moment longer, and, determined to save him at any risk, she quickly had her light skiff in the angry surf.

Knowing her own skill and strength, she had little fear of the result to herself, and was willing to take big chances to save a human life.

When brave men dared not face the angry seas, she had done so in her little skiff, and rescued the crew of a pilot-boat stranded off the shore, and when humanity called her she forgot self.

As she forced her little shell with exceeding speed, through the tumbling seas, she saw a great breaker overwhelm the brave swimmer, and gave him up for lost, but in a moment more, a dark object came hurled toward the boat. It was the body of a man. Instantly, as it came near, she ceased rowing, and grasping the insensible form with her right hand held it firm and gazed intently into the upturned face; but with a low cry of dismay, shrunk back, for the face she gazed upon was not that of the man she had seen on the wreckage.

He was youthful, handsome and full of life, and he was clad in the uniform of an officer.

This one was old, with grizzly beard, the eyes wide open and staring, but with no life in their look, and the man was clad in the garb of a common seaman.

Quickly she relinquished her grasp, and for a moment was almost unnerved, as the dead form was whirled away from sight, but only to be succeeded by another—that of the man she had seen upon the wreckage.

It was suddenly lifted on a wave and floated right up to the very gunwales, and again her strong right hand was stretched forth to save, as she cried, almost joyously:

"Thank God! this is the one I came to save!"

With a strength none could have believed to be in that woman's delicate form, she firmly grasped the insensate body; with one quick pull and lift it was in the boat; then grasping the oars again, she headed for shore.

Almost in a moment the light craft rode in on a mighty wave, and speeded too, by her quick, strong stroke, she and her precious burden were thrown far up on the beach.

Instantly she was out on the soaked sands, and again using that remarkable strength, the skiff was drawn further away, and the sea had lost its victim.

Was he dead?

Horrible, agonizing thought!

Canting the boat the brave girl tenderly rolled the body out on the soft beach and at once proceeded to the work of resuscitation.

Using every means for restoration within her power, she soon saw that consciousness was returning, and eagerly she watched and waited.

She saw that the face was darkly bronzed and very handsome, the features being regular and strongly marked.

But the face was bruised here and there, and one arm she discovered was badly cut, doubtless by pieces of the wreckage.

His clothes, too, were torn, and his hands bleeding, where he had cut them in clinging to and warding off the mass of spars and rigging.

But, even as he was, he looked the true man, and Lily gazed upon him with a look which plainly meant that she would risk life again to save him.

At last upon her opened his eyes, and though dimmed by the spray that had dashed into them, she felt their power, while she flushed crimson, as he said, after glancing about him an instant:

"You saved my life!"

"I saw that you could not make the shore very well without aid, sir."

"I would have drowned, but for you, and I owe you the deepest debt one can owe another."

"I have done very little to be thanked for."

"You are too modest— Ah! I feel my bruises, now that I attempt to move," and he winced with pain as he made an effort to rise.

"You were hurt in the wreckage?"

"Yes, it was so rough I had a hard struggle for life, and for long, long hours, it seemed to me; but I have no bones broken, and will soon be myself again, and only hope my gallant crew have fared no worse."

# The Magic Ship.

"Willingly, sir, and it would be better, for see, there are several bodies cast upon the beach, whom the men can bury," and Lily shuddered, as she recalled her clutching the ghastly form in the surf, while she pointed to the forms of several seamen which had been cast ashore.

"Yes, they are my poor lads, who went overboard when the storm first struck us," said the young officer, sadly.

"It was a fearful storm, sir, for I lay awake listening to it, and pitying poor sailors."

"You live near here then?" and Robin Sherwood gazed with admiration into the beautiful face.

"Yes, sir, I live at the light-house on Sandy Hook."

"My mother is the keeper."

"Ah! I have heard of a certain fair heroine of the light-house, who has saved a number of lives."

"Are you, may I ask, the Lily of the Light-house?"

"Yes, sir, I am Lily Lennox," she answered, modestly, and then added quickly:

"I will now go after your men, sir, for your vessel lies two leagues from here."

"I am sorry to leave you alone, and suffering, sir, but it cannot be helped."

"It might have been far worse, my sweet girl."

"But will you return with the boat?"

"No, sir, for there will be no need of my doing so."

"Then I shall take pleasure in calling at the light-house to thank you for all that you have done for me, as soon as I am able to run down from the city."

"Good-by!"

He held forth his hand and she grasped it warmly, and then hurried away, a strange feeling at her heart, and her face wearing a look of trouble, called there by the breaking upon her a passion she had never known before, and which found vent in the muttered words that came from her lips, as she turned the prow of her surf-skiff down toward the Hook:

"I thought that I loved Carroll, but now I know that I did not."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE FREEBOOTERS' PRIZE.

For some minutes after the departure of Lily of the Light-house, Captain Robin Sherwood sat with bowed head, buried in deep thought.

"Bah! I am a fool to let that little maid of the light-house make me untrue to my vows of love to Celeste even for a minute."

"True, she has saved my life, she risked her own to do so, and she is beautiful in face and form, and is doubtless so in character, and it is natural that I shoul feel most kindly toward her."

"But what would my proud mother say, and my beautiful sister, if they knew that I allowed the face of this little sailor-girl to come between me and my regard for Celeste Cenas the New York belle and heiress?"

"Why, they would disown me as son and brother, I verily believe."

"Ah me! I cannot but feel though, that I might be happier through life with a fair, sweet girl such as this ocean lily, of my own heart's choosing, than with the proud beauty whom men rave about, and have sought hard to win."

For a moment he was silent, and then, as his eyes fell upon another body hurled ashore by the breakers, he said:

"Poor lads, they have met a sailor's fate, and died at their posts."

"They shall be carried on board the brig and buried from her decks."

"Well, it is a miracle that I am alive, and Lonsdale has done nobly to get the brig into a haven, after the seas and axes made a wreck of her."

"He must have rigged jury-masts, for how else could he have gotten in, though how he managed to do so in that storm I cannot tell."

"Well, the hull is all right, and I will soon have new sticks in her, and then I shall make it my duty to hunt down that Magic Ship, for I'll ship a crew for the special work— Oh! who have we here?"

The latter query was caused by seeing suddenly coming toward him half a dozen rough-looking men, clad in sailor suits and tarpaulins.

They were all armed, and the expression of their faces was far from reassuring.

"I have heard of the Sandy Hook smugglers, wreckers and freebooters, and these certainly don't belie, from their looks, such a calling."

"I wonder if I have been cast up by the sea to die by the hands of my fellow-men, for from all I have heard about these wretches they are merciless," and Robin Sherwood, by a tremendous effort of his will, arose to his feet and faced the men.

They had come from the cedar thicket further down the neck of sand, and skulked along the beach, as though anxious to avoid being seen by any one who might be standing upon the Highlands a mile beyond.

They came toward the shipwrecked man with scowling faces, and, as they reached the body of the first seaman cast ashore, coolly bent over him, searched his pockets for what little valuables they might contain, and then came on to the others.

"That settles it! they are a hard lot, and I powerless to protect myself against them," muttered the young officer.

But he faced them with fearless mien, and, as they came up, said pleasantly:

"Well, lads, have you come to aid a poor shipwrecked mariner to his ship, and get a fat purse for your trouble?"

"I guesses we could get a fatter purse by keepin' you away from your ship, cap'n, fer so I sees you is by yer eperlets," answered one who seemed to be the leader.

"Ah! you mean ransom?" said Robin Sherwood, with a sneer.

"You hes hit it."

"Well, what terms do you ask?"

"Is ther dismasted craft in ther Hook yours?"

"Yes."

"We seen yer drift ashore on a lot o' truck as looked as ef it might hev comed from her decks."

"Yes."

"And so we jist comed down ter see you."

"Well?"

"Do yer know who we is?"

"No."

"Does yer suspect?"

"Yes; I suspect you of being a gang of cut-throats

who are said to infest Sandy Hook," was the bold reply.

"You suspects too much, cap'n, fer yer own good."

"Speak out, man, and tell me what you want with me."

"We wants yer money first."

"Well, there is my purse," and a well-filled silk purse was cast upon the sand at the feet of the leader.

"You wears a watch, I sees, from the fob-chain."

That, too, was thrown upon the sand.

"Thet are a handsome ring," and the wretch pointed to a handsome seal ring that was upon the little finger of the officer's left hand.

"The watch and ring are heirlooms, my robber friend, but there is no need of mincing matters with a villain, so now you have all; but if you will send them on board the brig-of-war Quickstep at any time, I will give you double their value in gold, and ask no questions of your messenger."

"I'll send 'em, if you prizes 'em, especially as yer mentions ther Quickstep, fer it tells me who you is, but I'll send 'em to your sick mother, fer it is likely she'd pay well fer some keepsake o' her dead son."

"Her dead son?"

"Yes, fer you suspects too much to be let live."

"Come, we wants you to go with us."

"Where would you take me?"

"To a little den o' ours we hes in the cedars."

"Come!"

"I cannot walk, for I am severely hurt, and—"

Robin Sherwood checked himself, for he was about to say that Lily Lennox had then gone for his boat's crew to carry him to his vessel, but a glance showed him that the sand-hills hid him from the cedars, and that, as they had not spoken of seeing the girl, they had doubtless not done so, while her tracks had already disappeared from the wet sand.

"And what, cap'n?" asked the man.

"And if you wish me to go with you, you will have to carry me."

"We'll do it."

"Come, lads, lift him up and fetch him along, fer I don't like being out here in full view o' some one that might be on the Highlands."

Robin Sherwood made no resistance, and he was rudely raised in the arms of several of the men and borne toward the cedar thicket, the leader remarking significantly:

"Waal, lads, we has got a prize that were cast up at our feet."

## CHAPTER XI.

### TRACKED.

WHEN Lily of the Light-house had run down the Shrewsbury in her little skiff, she suddenly discerned the Quickstep moving away from her anchorage.

The brig was under hastily-rigged jury-masts, with what sail spread upon them that could be set, and, as the wind was brisk and fair for her, was evidently making all haste possible for the city.

Standing up in her surf-skiff the young girl shouted at the top of her clear, musical voice, and waved her tarpaulin vigorously.

But the eyes of all on board seemed too much taken up with watching the movement of their vessel under the impromptu schooner rig to hear the hail, or to see aught transpiring off on the water.

With regret, at first, the maiden saw the Quickstep glide slowly away, and then, while a flush stole over her face, she said:

"I am not sorry she has gone, for now I will have to take him to the light-house, and I know mother will give him welcome and do all in her power for him."

About then she put her little boat, and in less than an hour after her departure again landed at the spot she had left.

Leaving the skiff, she crossed the neck of land, to suddenly start, for nowhere visible was Robin Sherwood.

"Can he have become tired of waiting, and gone alone down toward the Hook?"

But there was no one to answer the question, and she gazed about her in a bewildered sort of a way, and half-hurt that he should have gone, with a fear that he had doubted her going upon her errand in haste.

There was heaped up the wreckage from the brig, and here and there, scattered along the beach, were the bodies of the seamen who had been washed overboard, and six of these ghastly forms she counted.

Then her eyes fell upon the spot where the young officer had been, and she started, and gazed quickly about her.

"There have been others here."

"Could they have come from the brig?"

"No, for the vessel would not have sailed without them."

"Yes, there are a number of tracks, one, two, three, yes, six in all, and they go toward the cedars."

"Heaven have mercy! I know who they are!"

With these words she hastily followed on the track of those who had borne Robin Sherwood off.

The impress of their feet had not yet wholly been obliterated from the moist sand of the beach, and without the slightest trouble she followed the trail until she came to the first clump of cedars.

They were scraggy, hardy trees, and had withstood a thousand storms without being uprooted, although their foundation was of sand instead of on a rock.

After passing the first thicket, the cedars became more frequent, until they formed a solid forest, thick and almost impenetrable, for other trees had grown in their midst.

Keeping upon the beach, the maiden skirted the timber, as those she followed had done, until, after half a mile, the scene became wild and desolate in the extreme.

The wind had formed great sand-hills upon the sea-shore, and up to them grew the forest of cedars, while in their front was the broad beach, upon which the surf of the Atlantic thundered with deafening roar.

A wild, picturesque, lonely place it was, and the very retreat for a lawless band.

And here had the freebooter band their retreat.

A bold, reckless set of men, half a score only in number, they were but the spies of a large fraternity, taking their turn of a month's stay there, to

watch outgoing and incoming vessels, and to gather up the refuse of wrecks, which they sometimes made, by luring trusting mariners on dark stormy nights ashore with a false beacon.

In among the sand-hills and cedars the freebooters had gone with their prisoner, and halted at their desolate camp.

Following them, the daring girl found hidden away between two of the sand-hills, several boats, from a large launch to a light fishing-skiff.

In the rear of these, sheltered by the cedars and sand-hills, was the freebooters' camp.

There was a rude cabin, with a thatched roof shelter in front, and beneath this were the half-score desperate men who then formed the crew of duty on Sandy Hook.

In their midst, lying upon the ground, and reclining upon one elbow, was their prisoner.

His face was pale, but fearless, and his eyes were full of fire, as he met the gaze of his captors.

None saw the maiden as she stood there gazing upon the group, or heard her lowly-spoken words:

"Thank God I have tracked them to their lair!"

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE SAILOR'S SENTENCE.

DETERMINED not to make her presence known yet awhile, Lily Lennox shrunk back behind a sand-hill, and listened to what was being said by the freebooters.

The leader, the same man who had been spokesman upon discovering Captain Sherwood, was speaking, and his words were far from giving a ray of hope to the prisoner.

"I don't mind offerin' terms, cap'n, but we has to make the best o' the bargain," he was saying;

"You see you come ashore on our beach—"

"Ah! you have purchased it then, or got a grant of it, since I last sailed out of New York port," said the young officer with a sneer.

"Waal, we has that power over it that nobody dares come here to molest us."

"You will find that far from the case if I ever get out of your vile clutches," was the unguarded remark of Sherwood.

"Yes, no doubt; but that is just what we is coming to in drivin' a bargain."

"Well, name your terms and then I'll tell you what I'll do," impatiently said the young officer.

"Now don't be impatient, cap'n."

"But I am impatient."

"I was washed away from my vessel early last evening, and all night, and until an hour ago, was clinging to wreckage in the rough waters."

"I am severely hurt, worn out, and have no patience to dally with such as you, so say out what you wish, and then, if I do not agree to your terms I will say so frankly, and you can do your worst."

"Well, you is a plucky fellow, anyhow."

"He is fer sart'in."

"I has heerd yer spoken of fer hevin' Satin's grit, cap'n."

"They says you deserves yer epaulets, young as yer is."

Such were the remarks that passed round the group of outlaws, and with real admiration for the brave man in their midst.

But

# The Magic Ship.

just offered for your life, and second, to take an oath."

"An oath?"

"Yes, cap'n."

"Speak, man, and tell me what you mean."

"I believe you holds your word as good as gold?"

"Yes; I have so considered it."

"And if you take an oath you would keep it?"

"Most certainly."

"Then, cap'n, our terms is, that when we get your mother's gold, and your gold, that you have, before you leave this place, to take a solemn oath never to betray us, or to attack us with your crew, or to hint that you know that a band of freebooters have a retreat on Sandy Hook."

"And do you expect me to bind myself to thus protect crime?" indignantly asked the young officer.

"We most certainly do."

"To swear that I will not land a force to wipe you off the face of the earth?"

"Yes, cap'n."

"There you mistake your man."

"We was kinder afraid you wouldn't."

"You may be certain that I will not take any such oath."

"It's death then."

"So be it."

"We'll kill you sure."

"I can die but once."

"It is a pity for a young man like you to die."

"You are not young, nor such as I, so you are no judge," coolly responded Sherwood.

"Well, it looks so."

"Appearances are often deceitful, Sir Cut-throat. I have risked life many times, and I had hoped when I did fall that it would be upon the deck of my vessel, fighting bravely for the right."

"But if cruel fate causes me to die at the hands of a gang of pirates, so be it, I will not flinch from my doom."

"Waah, you is a plucky man, and no mistake," said the leader, while another remarked:

"I would vote to turn him loose for his grit, which is great."

"Come, you have heard my answer, so let me end this dallying," urged the young sailor.

"You seem in a hurry to die, cap'n."

"The sooner I shut my eyes to your faces the better."

"Well, messmates, you hear his words?" and the leader looked around upon his fellow cut-throats, who assented in general:

"Yes."

"Is it die for him?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"String him up to the signal cedar thar!" said one.

"Shoot him!" cried another.

"Knife him!" suggested a third.

"Messmates, I have an idea about killing him," broke in the leader.

"Out with it, Anchor Tom!" cried several voices, in chorus.

"Well, as we have to kill him, we might as well make a leetle gold out of the work."

The look of all asked the question:

"How?"

"You see the cap'n here will be reported as lost overboard from his ship?"

"Yes."

"His family would be awful glad to get his body."

"Yes."

"So, messmates, we'll just drown him."

"I see, Anchor Tom, and sell the dear remains to his loving mother," cried one of the villains.

"You have it, for that is my idee."

"Now you will do to anchor to, Tom, and you is rightly named," said an admiring messmate.

"Yes, I am pretty good to anchor to, messmates, I know," responded the leader, with an air of self-congratulation, and then he continued:

"I'll take the remains up to the city in my fishing-boat, and say I found 'em, and I know the rich widow Sherwood will pay well for 'em."

"I shall have decent burial at least, if I am murdered," said Robin Sherwood, with an air of one who seemed reckless of his fate.

"Well, cap'n, you can't blame us, for we offered you terms and you refused."

"But it hain't too late yet to agree to 'em."

"Never!"

"Then you better say your prayers, for you will be a dead man in ten minutes."

"You, Ben and Jack, swim out with the cap'n into the surf and hold him under until he is dead; but mind you, don't you let go of him, for his remains is valuable."

"I'll hold on to him like a right-bower anchor, Tom."

"And I'll anchor myself to him with a cable, so as he can't get away," were the remarks of the two villains selected as the executioners.

"Come, then, take the cap'n out and drown him, and then I'll carry his body to the city and sell it to his family," said Anchor Tom.

But as the two men laid their hands upon the shoulders of the helpless officer, there suddenly darted into their midst a slender form, and in ringing tones came the words:

"Freebooters of Sandy Hook, I have a word to say just here!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

### BOUND BY AN OATH.

THE sudden coming of the Lily of the Light-house upon the scene of their wrong-doing, certainly nonplussed the freebooters.

Their haunt was so remote, at that time, from any one, or any habitation, and the few vessels driven by stress of weather to find anchorage in the Hook haven were so careful to give the shore as wide a berth as possible, that the outlaws little dreamed of interruption from any one.

"The Lighthouse Lily!" broke from the lips of nearly every man, which at once proved that she was not unknown to them.

She had heard all that passed, and confident that she must act promptly to save the young

officer, she had boldly confronted his foes just as they were bearing him away to death.

Little had he dreamed of such an interruption, though he had hoped that his men, sent by the young girl, might come upon the scene in time to save him.

His first feeling was for the maiden, who had thus come into the lion's lair, as it were; but then he seemed to feel that she must be supported by those who had not yet shown themselves, but would at the proper moment.

Boldly she faced the outlaws, seeming to let her eyes rest upon every face, and then from her lips came the words, spoken calmly, and with firmness:

"Anchor Tom, are you not transgressing your orders?"

Robin Sherwood started.

The maiden had called the outlaw leader by name, so could not be unknown to him.

What could it mean?

"I hain't done nothing, miss," was the sullen reply.

"You were about to kill this officer."

"Who says so?" doggedly asked the man.

"I say so."

"You hain't got no proof, miss."

"I have, for I have been standing yonder and heard all."

"Well, he wouldn't take oath not to betray us, miss, so, you see, we had to protect ourselves."

"You had no right to act in the matter."

"You found him wounded and shipwrecked upon the beach, and you should have taken him to the city, or to your chief."

"Perhaps you is right, miss."

"I am right, and your chief shall hear of this intended red work of yours, unless you at once obey my orders."

"I am ready, miss, to do all you command."

"Then let four of your men make a stretcher and bear this gentleman to my boat."

"We will do it, miss; but you won't speak to the chief about it?"

"That depends upon your future good-behavior."

"If you take him away, he will betray us."

"He'll do it, sure," chimed in several others of the band.

Lily looked troubled, for she seemed to feel in a quandary what to do.

Robin Sherwood had listened with intense surprise to all that had been said, wondering at her strange power over the desperate crew.

Now he saw that the words of Anchor Tom, about his betraying them, seemed to have struck home, and he was at a loss to know what would be the upshot of it all.

Seeing their advantage, several of the outlaws said quickly:

"Yes, miss, he'll betray us, and then you know what will follow."

"He will not betray you," said Lily, firmly.

"Yes, but he will," urged Anchor Tom.

"I say that he will not, for he will give his pledge not to do so."

"We tried him on that, and it was no go."

Turning to Robin Sherwood, Lily said:

"You have heard what these men say?"

"Yes, all."

"They are aware that you know them as they are."

"The Sandy Hook Freebooters?" quietly said Sherwood.

"Yes."

"Their looks betrayed them villains, before their words told the secret," was the bold response.

"Well, they are outlaws, and known as the Freebooters of Sandy Hook."

"I tell you this frankly, sir."

"And what are they to you?" he asked, with something like scorn in his tone.

The lovely face flushed, and an angry light came in the beautiful eyes; but she answered calmly:

"I do not wonder at your question, Captain Sherwood; but I will not answer it."

"Sufficient for you to know that I am anxious to save your life, and I can only do so by giving me your pledge not to betray what you have this day discovered."

"You were cast upon this shore, and thereby you have found out a secret, and I beg that you will go from here without considering it your duty to make your discovery known."

"Duty prompts me to do so."

"True; but the sea is large and there is work for you to do there."

"Give me your pledge that you will remember what occurs here only as a dream, and keep the secret."

"Is this a demand?" he asked, coolly.

"No, it is an entreaty, an appeal to you," she said, with a pathos that touched him.

"Then I make the pledge," he frankly said.

"I must ask more," she replied.

"What more?"

"Your oath."

He frowned, and responded:

"My word I hold as my oath."

"And so would I, sir; but with these men it is different."

"Hold up your right hand, Captain Sherwood!"

He obeyed in silence.

"Do you swear by your hope of Heaven that you will not betray the secret you have this day discovered of the Freebooters of Sandy Hook?"

"I do!"

He spoke the words firmly, looking her squarely in the eyes, and she asked:

"Men, are you satisfied?"

A murmur of assent ran around the group, and then the maiden said authoritatively:

"Now carry that officer to my boat!"

A litter of oars was quickly made, and Robin Sherwood was placed thereon, for, while he could stand upright, his injuries were such that he was unable to walk, and Lighthouse Lily had seen the agony he suffered, when she forced him to walk a few steps away from the Freebooters, that she might urge him to make the pledge not to betray them.

Then four of the men took up the litter and started along the beach the way they had come, while Lily of the Light-house tarried to have a few words with Anchor Tom, greatly to that worthy's disgust, for he found himself a poorer man after her departure, for she had demanded of him the watch, ring and purse of the young officer.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE SHERWOODS.

IN an aristocratic quarter of the City of New York, at the time of which I write, stood an elegant mansion, the home of wealth and refinement.

Its grounds occupied an entire square upon the west side, and its lawn ran down to the banks of the Hudson, for then the presence of traffic had not made that grand stream a busy mart as it is to-day for miles beyond the Battery.

The mansion was of stone, large, with great, comfortable rooms, wide halls, and an air of luxury about it that was very inviting.

The grounds were handsomely laid out, and summer-houses were here and there among the ornamental trees to invite repose upon a warm summer day.

But when the reader beholds the handsome abode, an air of gloom is upon all.

Twilight is coming on, and the servants light the lamps in a noiseless way, while from the sitting-room comes the sound of weeping.

A woman is sobbing as though her very heart-strings would break, and a voice low and sympathetic is breathing words of consolation.

But it is a mother that sobs for her first-born, her idol, and, like Rachel weeping for her children, she refuses to be comforted.

An hour before an officer in full uniform had visited the mansion, and his mission was a sad and painful one.

He had gone there to tell the haughty mother that her son had been lost at sea.

It was Lucas Lonsdale, and in a few words he had told his sad story, and the mansion, which that night was to have been a scene of gayety, in honor of the birthday anniversary of its young mistress, Corinne Sherwood, was at once plunged into a house of mourning.

who, having no children of his own, had adopted her.

In coming from her home in Baltimore, after her parents' death, the vessel on which she was a passenger to New York had been captured by a pirate craft; but a few hours after an armed schooner hove in sight, gave chase, and, after a hot fight, made the outlaw strike his black flag to a foe far his inferior in guns and men.

The officer who commanded the little cruiser was Lieutenant Robin Sherwood, and thus it was that the two had met.

Whether it was the wealth of Celeste Cerras, her beauty, or her accomplishments that won the admiration of Mrs. Sherwood, no one knew; but she set her heart upon it that her son should make the maiden his wife, and with such infinite tact did she work to that end, that the young couple became engaged just before Robin sailed upon his cruise in the Quickstep.

Thus the reader can understand how sad the blow fell upon three hearts, when Lucas Lonsdale had told his sad story of the loss of his gallant commander, and that his life had been sacrificed in his effort to save Midshipman Park Pelham from death.

#### CHAPTER XV.

##### THE TWO VISITORS.

A KNOCK at the sitting-room door caused each of its three occupants to start, for their nerves were unstrung by their sorrow.

It was Bailey, the old butler and factotum, and his honest face was as sorrowful as those he saw before him, for he had dearly loved his young master.

"Colonel Bertie Grayson presents his deepest sympathy to you all, ma'am, and begs that he may see you," said the old butler.

Now, Colonel Bertie Grayson was a personage of importance at the Sherwood mansion, for a few weeks before he had become engaged to Corinne, a consummation seeming to be far more desired by the gentleman and Mrs. Sherwood, than by the maiden.

But the colonel, who had once been an English officer, was reputed to be immensely rich, was a younger son of a noble, with prospects of inheriting a title should some half-dozen senior brothers die off, and had a certain fascination of manner about him that seemed irresistible with both men and women.

He admitted having passed forty years upon this globe terrestrial, but did not look thirty-five, while Corinne Sherwood was just upon the threshold of seventeen.

The colonel lived in bachelor quarters on Fulton street, then a fashionable quarter, kept his horses, and a foreign valet that looked like a pirate and knew how to hold his tongue upon all matters pertaining to himself and his master.

"Say to Colonel Grayson that we will see him," said Mrs. Sherwood, with an emphasis upon the pronoun.

At the same time, with a great effort, she arose to her feet, dried her eyes and faced the door, while Corinne threw herself upon the divan just vacated by her mother, and buried her face in her hands.

Just then the door swung open and Bailey ushered in Colonel Bertie Grayson, announcing him in a subdued tone.

A tall man, with military carriage, and a dark face, with winning smile and manners entered.

He was dressed in deep black, and his clothes were of faultless fit, while now he wore a look that was full of deepest sympathy, in spite of the slight smile which seemed habitual to him.

"My dear Mrs. Sherwood, you have my heartfull of sympathy," he said, in a low, rich-toned voice, grasping the hand of Mrs. Sherwood, and then taking that of Celeste Cerras, he continued:

"God knows I had rather it had been myself, for I am alone in the world."

"Yet you have one to love you as dearly," and Mrs. Sherwood motioned with her stately head toward the form on the divan.

"I hope so from my inmost heart," he said, softly, and crossing the room he laid his hand lightly upon the jetty curls of Corinne, and said:

"Corinne, my heart bleeds for you; and believe me, I will do all in my power to fill the place of the noble brother you have lost."

In an instant she was upon her feet, gazing him straight in the eyes, while she said, passionately:

"Oh, if you would only be a brother to me and not what you are, then I could love you with my whole heart!"

He shrank back at her words, while her mother cried, sternly:

"Corinne! my child!"

Then turning to Colonel Grayson, she continued:

"Poor child, she is so overwhelmed with grief she knows not what she says."

For an instant the young girl seemed about to make reply, but once more the door opened and Bailey appearing, she dropped again to her place upon the divan.

"Young girl to see you, ma'am," said the

"I can see no one, Bailey, and please say so emphatically," was Mrs. Sherwood's stern rejoinder.

"But, ma'am, she says she is the bearer of important tidings which you should know at once," urged Bailey.

"Who is she?"

"I never saw her before, ma'am; but she is dressed like a sailor-girl."

"A sailor-girl, Bailey?"

"Permit me to see her for you, my dear madam," said Colonel Grayson.

"No, thank you, colonel, I will permit her to come in, for she may be a fisher-girl from the lower bay, with some tidings of my poor boy. Lieutenant Lonsdale told me he had made an offer of a reward to the fishermen if they found the body," and Mrs. Sherwood jerked the last words out, while her lips quivered.

"I will see the girl, Bailey," she said, controlling her emotion.

The butler disappeared, and soon after reentered, accompanied by a slender form, clad in blue cloth, and with a sailor-collar falling upon her shapely shoulders.

A sun-hat was upon her head, and beneath it was a face, the beauty of which caused the colonel and the three ladies to fairly start with surprised admiration, for Corinne had risen to her feet at the entrance of the visitor.

There was a slight shrinking of the young girl as she saw before her so many; but, with perfect composure, she said:

"Is this Mrs. Sherwood?"

"I am Mrs. Sherwood, my child, and may I ask who you are?" said the lady, not unkindly, for the sweet face at once won a kind welcome.

"It is not of myself, madam, that I have come to speak, but to bring you good tidings, which will drive the sorrow from your faces I now see resting upon them," was the reply.

"My son lives!" almost shrieked Mrs. Sherwood, to quickly add, in a low, trembling tone:

"Or have you only found his body?"

"Your son lives, Mrs. Sherwood," were the quivering words, delivered in a tone that showed the joy it gave to make the glad tidings known.

Instantly the maiden beheld four faces peering into her own, while Mrs. Sherwood grasped her shoulder with a grip that made her wince, while she asked:

"Lives, did you say, girl?"

"Yes, madam."

"Thank God for those blessed words."

"Do you hear, Corinne, your brother is alive?"

"Celeste! did you hear her words?"

"But where, child, is my noble boy, for I would go to him at once."

"Quick! tell me, or go with me!" and the mother's heart was all aglow.

"Captain Sherwood, madam, clung to the wreckage of his vessel, and was cast ashore upon the beach, many miles from here," said the maiden, softly.

"Why, then, did he not come to us, instead of sending?"

"Because, madam, his long exposure and struggle for life had utterly broken him down, while he was also slightly injured by being dashed against the wreckage."

"My son ill, suffering, and I not with him?"

"I will go at once!"

"That will be impossible, madam."

"Impossible! and why?" haughtily demanded Mrs. Sherwood.

"Because he is not where you can visit him," was the cold response.

"In Heaven's name, girl, tell me where he is?"

"Safe, madam, and with those who will care for him as tenderly as you would."

"This is remarkable," said Mrs. Sherwood.

"It is indeed, madam."

"My girl, make known at once to Mrs. Sherwood where her son, the captain, is," said Colonel Bertie Grayson, sternly.

His words turned the eyes of the young girl full upon him, and she seemed slightly to start as she met his gaze.

But she answered firmly:

"I was commanded, sir, by Captain Sherwood to seek his home and make known to his mother that he was alive, and would come to her as soon as he was able to do so, which will be in a few days."

"And you refuse to divulge his whereabouts?"

"I do, sir."

"But you must."

The young girl smiled, and there was a look of defiance in the smile, while she said:

"I am the best judge of what I must and must not do."

"Much as I thank you, girl, for the glad news you bring, I will have to find a way to force you to tell all that you know," said Mrs. Sherwood, sternly.

The defiant look increased upon the beautiful face, while Corinne stepped forward and said:

"Mother, this is unkind, for she has a right to withhold what she pleases, especially as she has already been the bearer of such joyful news for us all."

It was seldom that Corinne Sherwood took such a determined stand, and her mother, Colonel Grayson and Celeste looked at her in amaze-

ment, and noticing the angry look upon Mrs. Sherwood's face, the fair young messenger said quickly, with a smile of thanks at her generous defender:

"Mrs. Sherwood, I have brought you the news that your son's life was spared, though he is slightly injured, but in a few days will return to his home."

"He is among those who will care for him, and more I cannot tell you, so I will bid you good-night."

"No, you must, you shall clear up this mystery."

"You bring me glad tidings that my son lives, and yet you refuse to say where he is, or with whom, that I may fly to him at once, and I will compel you to speak."

"Mother!" said Corinne, reproachfully.

"Mrs. Sherwood, you have no power to compel me to speak," was the calm reply of the girl.

"Answer me! did my son request that you give not his place of retirement?"

The face of the young girl reddened, but she answered frankly:

"It was my wish and he acquiesced in it."

"Captain Sherwood must certainly be severely injured, as to be so weak as to be swerved by the will of a common fisher-girl," said Celeste Cerras, scornfully.

The eyes of the young girl flashed at her words, and a hasty reply seemed to spring to her lips; but smothering her feelings, she smiled scornfully, and with a slight bow turned away.

"Colonel Grayson, I beg of you to detain that girl."

"I will have this strange mystery attending my son cleared up," cried Mrs. Sherwood, excitedly.

"Pardon me, my dear madam, if I decline, and be good enough to allow her to depart," said the colonel, in a significant tone, which Mrs. Sherwood knew had a deep meaning, for she said nothing, and the fair messenger, who had half turned at her words, as though at bay, smiled sweetly toward Corinne, and glided from the room.

"Now, madam, I will beg you to excuse me, while I play the spy upon that young girl's movements," said the colonel.

"It is unmanly, Colonel Grayson, to dog the steps of one who has done good rather than evil, and that one a young and innocent girl," said Corinne, hotly.

The colonel started at the cutting words, and his dark face flushed; but he bowed low, and said calmly:

"I am serving your mother, Miss Sherwood, and even though I anger you, I shall follow upon the track of the very mysterious personage who has just departed."

"Do so, colonel, I beg of you, and upon your return, Corinne, foolish girl, will thank you," said Mrs. Sherwood, and the gentleman hastily departed to play the spy upon the Lily of the Light-house, for who and what she was he had determined to fathom for a motive known only to himself.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

##### THE SPY'S CHASE.

WHEN Colonel Bertie Grayson left the Sherwood mansion, it was by a side-door through the library-hall, and he gained an exit from the east wing, and was at the corner of the house by the time the Lily of the Light-house descended the broad stone steps leading from the front portal.

He saw the maiden go rapidly along the gravel walk, with its row of box-trees on either side, and, gaining the street, to turn toward the North, or Hudson river.

It was but a short walk to the water's edge, and there she sprung into a boat that was moored against the river-bank, and quickly a tiny sail was raised and the prow turned southward.

A fair breeze was blowing, and the light skiff glided along at a rapid rate.

But the colonel kept it in sight as he went swiftly along the street at a pace that few of his fashionable friends would have believed him capable of.

At length he came to a point off which lay a small schooner, evidently a pleasure-craft, from her rig and build.

The surf-skiff had already passed the sloop and was flying away on her course, which still lay southward, as though going down the harbor, or around the Battery and up the East river.

"Ho, the Sea Feather, ahoy!" sung out the colonel, in tones that sounded as though they had often rung on the quarter-deck.

No answer was returned, and again the colonel hailed, and more loudly than before.

Still no response.

"Curse the lazy lubbers, they are all asleep or drunk," said the colonel, and a glance at the surf-skiff showing him that it was fast disappearing in the darkness, he looked hastily about for some sign of a boat.

But none could be seen, and a third time his voice hailed:

"Ho! the Sea Feather! ho!"

But the hail brought no response, and, with

an angry exclamation, the colonel again bent his gaze upon the receding sail-boat.

It was barely visible, and, determined not to be beaten, he buttoned his fashionably-cut coat closely around him, pulled his hat down hard over his eyes, and sprung boldly into the river.

Bertie Grayson was a powerful swimmer, and a few strong strokes carried him to the side of the yacht, and he threw himself upon deck amidships, and strode aft to the companionway, out of which a bright light shone.

Then there came to him voices in conversation, and springing down into the cabin he confronted a party of four men seated at the table gambling with dice, and with pipes in their mouths, and bottles and glasses at their hands.

They were dressed in sailor-rig, and at sight of him sprung to their feet in alarm, while one, who appeared to be the leader, cried out:

"The captain!"

"Yes, you riotous hounds, and this is the way I catch you, drinking my liquors, and enjoying yourselves in my cabin when I am away."

"Loyd, you are not fit to act as master of this craft, and I will see that you do not disgrace the berth longer."

"Mercy, captain! I will not offend again," cried the man addressed as Loyd.

But Colonel Grayson stepped to a small desk, and unlocking it with a key taken from his pocket, took out a pair of steel manacles.

"Hold out your hands and step here, sir!" he said, sternly, motioning for the man to approach the mizzen-mast, which went down through the forward end of the handsomely furnished and commodious cabin.

Silently the man obeyed, and seizing his hands, the colonel dragged them on either side of the mast, and quickly clapped the manacles upon the wrists.

"Now get on deck, you rascals, and set sail, and hoist the anchor, and lose no time about it, either!"

The three seamen obeyed with an alacrity that showed they stood in holy awe of their commander.

Following them upon deck, the colonel asked:

"Brace, where are the others of the crew?"

"Ashore, sir."

"Getting drunk, I suppose; but I'll sail without them," and Colonel Grayson took a glass he had brought out of the cabin, and narrowly searched the waters for the surf-skiff.

"Ha! I see her, and she is heading for the Narrows.

"Do you wish me to help you, you lubbers, get that little piece of iron out of the mud?"

It was very evident that the men did not, for they hauled the anchor up as he asked the question, and with her jib and mainsail set, the trim little schooner of thirty tons began to forge through the waters.

To set the foresail and topsails was then but a few minutes' work, for the men wished to redeem themselves in their captain's eyes, and then the little pleasure craft flew along like a bird.

Her owner took the helm himself, and held her straight upon her course down the river, the wind being fair upon her starboard quarter.

Past the Battery she went, and then laid her course for the Narrows, getting better wind as she reached the upper harbor.

"I am gaining on the girl, but her boat sails like a witch," muttered the colonel, who often raised the glass to his eye, and bent it upon the surf skiff, all of half a league ahead.

But, although it was true the Sea Feather was gaining upon the surf-skiff, it was so slowly that the colonel saw that he could not overhaul the little craft before it had passed through the Narrows.

"The wind is too light for the Feather, and just what the skiff wants."

"But I'll hold on as long as there is a breath of wind, and Heaven grant it does not fail me, as it threatens to do," he muttered.

And on the two fleet crafts went, while the wind seemed gradually failing, a fact that prevented the schooner from gaining as rapidly as before.

Through the Narrows the wind was fitful and light, and shortly after the Feather had passed through to the Lower Bay, it died almost away.

"Curses! the wind has left us!" cried the colonel.

"No, sir, for there is a ripple about the bows yet," said one of the men.

"It will not last," he said, impatiently, and then added with strange earnestness for so slight a reason it seemed:

"But I'll not be foiled!"

"Lower away that boat, you lubbers, and be ready to spring to your places in it!"

"Ay, ay, sir," called out the men in chorus, and the boat hanging at the stern davits was the next moment alongside of the schooner.

"Go forward and let go the anchor as I luff!" came the next order.

The schooner came slowly round, for she barely had headway, and the next instant the colonel cried:

"Let go!"

Down with a splash went the anchor, and then the sails were let fall with a run, and the

colonel sprung into the little boat alongside, and was quickly followed by the men.

"Seize your oars and pull as though for your lives!" came the stern order, and away the boat started, making the water hiss about her bows, and leaving a foaming wake.

With his glass at his eye the colonel soon caught sight of the skiff ahead, and cried:

"She has lowered her sail and taken to her oars.

"Overtake that skiff, you devils, if you wish to be forgiven for your work this night!"

The men proved that they did wish to gain forgiveness for their spree, and bent to their oars as though pulling for their lives.

After a moment the colonel said, triumphantly:

"You are gaining, lads, though the girl pulls with marvelous power and speed."

And he smiled grimly, as each stroke of the oars brought them nearer to the surf-skiff.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### CATCHING A TARTAR.

"PULL, lads! pull! and I forgive you your spree in my cabin," cried the colonel, hoarsely, as he saw the surf-skiff suddenly swerve from her direct course, and head over toward the Coney Island shore.

The boat fairly leaped from the water at every tremendous stroke of the oars, and there was no doubt but that they were gaining upon the skiff, yet the colonel feared the young girl might reach the shore and escape in the darkness before he could come up.

"A month's wages to each of you, if you overhaul the skiff," he cried, and this incentive made the panting sailors forget their fatigue and pull the harder.

"Ha! she has ceased rowing.

"What does she mean?" he said, suddenly, as he saw the oars held by the maiden poised in the air an instant, and then laid aside.

"Can a breeze be springing up?" he muttered, and he scanned the waters upon every side to see if there was a ripple upon the calm surface.

"No, there is not a breath of air.

"What can the girl mean?"

As though in answer to his question he heard in ringing tones:

"Boat ahoy!"

"Ahoy the skiff!" he promptly answered.

"Are you in chase of me?" came the query in the same rich tones.

"I am," was the reply.

"Then I warn you to keep off, or I will fire upon you," came in determined tones.

In spite of the threat the colonel laughed, while he said, as though in high good-humor:

"Lads, that is good, isn't it?"

"Why she hails and threatens as though she were captain of a cruiser."

Then raising his voice he answered:

"I mean you no harm, lady."

"I have warned you off, and I am armed, so beware!" was the decided response.

"I desire a word with you, and upon my honor mean you no harm," he said, earnestly.

"This is no place to seek me, sir."

"Tell me then where I can see you."

"Nowhere," and the light oars again fell in the water.

"Give way, men," said the colonel, in a low tone, for the boat had been at rest while the hail and responses were going on.

At the first fall of the oars the young girl again cried, and in a voice that was in deadly earnest:

"Hold! if you follow in my wake I will fire!"

"Cease rowing, men! for the little Sathaness means what she says," said the colonel, and then he called out, as a happy thought seized him:

"Will you bear a message to Captain Sherwood for me?"

"Ah! I know you now—you are the gentleman I saw at the Sherwood mansion," said Lily.

"I am, and I trust now you will not fear me."

"Why have you followed me?"

"To see if I could persuade you to tell me all about poor Sherwood, for I feared there was something you cared not to tell to his mother."

"You are mistaken, sir, for I told her all I intended to, and can say no more to you," coldly replied Lily.

She had made no effort now to row away, and the boat had come alongside of the skiff.

"I am glad then that it is no worse, for I feared that the captain might be seriously hurt."

"No, he will be himself again in a few days."

"And you will not permit me to go with you to him?"

"I will not, sir."

"Is this decided?"

"It is."

"Suppose I follow you?"

"I shall not go there then."

"You cannot stay out upon the water all night?"

"I will stay here a week, rather than let you conquer my determination," came the firm reply.

"You are given to stubbornness, girl," said the colonel, with some degree of anger.

"And you are persistent to rudeness, sir?" was the prompt rejoinder.

The colonel winced under this shot and glanced at his crew, to see if they could appreciate it, while he said sternly:

"I have it in my power to capture you, and force from your lips the secret."

"You will find that you have caught a Tartar, and that my lips are as non-committal as though death's seal were upon them."

"Girl, you are incorrigible."

"And you, sir, are insulting."

"By Heaven! but you shall not conquer me!"

"One moment, please," she cried quickly, as he grasped her oar.

"Well?"

"You came from yonder yacht, which followed me down the harbor?"

"I did."

"The yacht lay off Chambers street as I came by, did it not?"

"It did."

"Who is its owner?"

"I am."

He saw her start, and then in a low, earnest tone came the words:

"Are you Colonel Bertie Grayson?"

"I am."

"Then I trust you will see the propriety of not pursuing me further, when I tell you that the Sea Wizard was in port last night."

It was the man's turn now to start, and he asked, quickly:

"What mean you, girl?"

"Just what I say, sir."

"Quick! tell me who you are?"

"One who knows just who Colonel Bertie Grayson is, and who dares him to follow her, if he wishes her to put back to New York and visit the mansion she left a short while ago."

"Girl, I will know more about you, for—"

"Beware! I am armed!" and he saw that a pistol covered his heart.

He released his grasp upon her oar, and dropping her pistol, she seized it and sent her skiff flying away, while she called out, in mocking tones:

"Good-night, Colonel Grayson!

"Follow me, if you dare!"

The thwarted man uttered an oath, and sternly ordered his men to give way.

But he put his tiller hard down, and the boat headed back for the schooner, the colonel in no amiable frame of mind at having been thwarted by a young girl.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE LOVER'S THREAT.

IT was the afternoon of the day following the scene of the chase described in the foregoing chapter, that Captain Robin Sherwood sat at a window in a small, but cosey room overlooking the ocean.

It was the little sitting-room of the Sandy Hook light-house, and everything about it, notwithstanding that one would believe it the home of people in the humble walks of life, had an air of refinement resting upon it.

As the small stone house, adjoining the light-house proper, had but four rooms in it, the young officer had been given the parlor, or sitting room, the settee having been arranged as a bed for him by Mrs. Lennox.

When taken to her home by Lily, he had been warmly welcomed by the mother, whom he found to be a sad-faced woman, bearing traces of having once been very beautiful, and still possessed of a refinement of manner and beauty which some deep sorrow she seemed to have known in the past, had not obliterated.

She met Lily at the water's edge as the boat touched, and hearing who her companion was, aided him, with the maiden's assistance, to her humble home, saying as she sunk down into a chair:

"Now, Lily, go and fetch the village doctor, for you can get back with him by night."

"No, no, I beg of you, for I am simply bruised up a little, my dear madam, and will come round all right with rest," said Robin Sherwood.

But Lily thought that perhaps some medicines and salves would aid in the recovery of the patient; so she told him that every month she had to go up to the city for stores, and would get for him what he wished.

As the young officer found that she was determined to go, he bade her seek his home and tell his mother that he was alive, for he knew that Lieutenant Lonsdale would report him as dead upon the arrival of the brig off the city.

"And kindly let her know where I am, and Colonel Bertie Grayson, who owns a pleasure-yacht, and is in love with my sister Corinne, will be only too glad to sail them down to see me," he added.

At this Lily looked troubled, and watching her face he saw it, so asked:

"Have I said aught to displease you, Miss Lennox?"

"Oh, no, only I do not wish your friends to come here."

that I would not trouble you and your good mother more."

"No, no, you are not the slightest trouble to either mother or myself, and if you can only put up with our humble hospitality for a few days, I will sail you up to the city as soon as you are able to go."

"Indeed will I be glad to remain, for your little home is a delightful haven of rest to me."

"So do not tell them where I am, but say I will soon return."

And thus it was settled, and the result the reader knows.

It was long after midnight when Lily returned to the light-house, and she sunk to sleep, utterly worn out.

And all the following day Robin Sherwood had not seen her, for her mother reported to him that she had slept until a late hour, and had then gone off in her skiff to catch a mess of fish.

Late in the afternoon Lily returned, and the supper-table was wheeled into the sitting-room, where the guest could get at it, and the three sat down to a meal that a New England farmer might have envied.

After tea Mrs. Lennox departed to attend to the lighting of the light in the tower, and Robin Sherwood and the maiden were alone.

It was nearly sunset, and the young officer was reclining upon his sofa, gazing one moment out upon the sea, and the next into the eyes of his lovely young hostess.

"You were kind enough, Miss Lennox, to say that you told my mother of my being alive; but will you tell me something of your visit to my home, whom you saw there, and all that might interest me?" said Sherwood, pleasantly:

Lily was silent for an instant, and then said:

"I arrived when your mother was mourning you as dead; but she granted me an interview, and I was ushered into a room where I met Mrs. Sherwood, your sister, a young lady—"

"Describe her, please."

"Very beautiful, stately, haughty, and with black eyes and golden hair."

"Thank you: it was Miss Celeste Cerras," and his face flushed slightly, a circumstance that did not escape the keen eye of the maiden.

"Was any one else present?" he asked.

"Yes, a Colonel Grayson."

"Ah yes, an English ex-army officer, who is very sweet on my pretty sister Corinne."

"There was no one else, and I gave my tidings, and left."

"Were they not a little surprised that you did not tell where I was?"

"Yes, a little— Ah!"

"What is it?" he asked quickly, as he saw her start suddenly, and he followed her look, which was out upon the sea.

"Only that pretty vessel that just came into sight," she said, composedly, pointing to a ship that was then visible a league off.

"My rank against a coxswain's berth that it is the Magic Ship!" he cried, excitedly, as his eyes fell upon the strange craft.

"Do you mean that mysterious vessel often seen in the offing, and which none of the cruisers have been able to capture?" she asked.

"Yes; you have heard of her, then?"

"Often, sir."

"I would give my fortune to capture that craft, and solve the mystery, for she is the one that wrecked my brig, as I was so taken up with chasing her, I failed to see the storm coming down astern until it struck us."

"Indeed! and you then lost sight of the— the Magic Ship?"

"Yes, until now, and I can swear yonder craft is one and the same."

"See, she is standing out to sea again."

The vessel referred to did change her course as the young officer spoke and stood seaward until she disappeared in the gathering darkness.

But Lily kept her place at the window, and often her eyes tried to pierce the darkness upon the waters.

At length she saw a shadowy object offshore, which soon took the shape of a vessel under sail.

She was running slowly along, under easy sail, and after watching her closely a few minutes, the while conversing with Sherwood, the maiden gave a sigh of relief, as though she had recognized the strange sail as not being the one that the young officer had said was the Magic Ship.

Passing on out of the view of the window, the vessel rounded the Hook, and running close inshore, taking in sail as she went, dropped her anchor noiselessly and came to a stop.

A moment after a boat left her side, and standing up in the stern was a single occupant, who sculled it rapidly shoreward.

Out upon the sandy beach he sprung, and drawing the boat half its length out of the water, he walked toward the light-house.

He had seen the light from the open window, as he sailed by, and around that way he went, to suddenly stop short, raise his hand to his head, and utter a suppressed cry.

A moment he stood thus, and then from his lips broke the words in a savage hiss:

"She is untrue to me, and her punishment shall be to see him die before her eyes!"

#### CHAPTER XIX.

##### THE FREEBOOTER CAPTAIN.

The one who made this savage threat to punish the Light-house Lily by killing Robin Sherwood in her presence, stood just outside the window, and where the light from within the sitting-room fell full upon him.

He was a young man, seemingly not over twenty-one or two, and with a face full of fearlessness, frankness and daring, a face that one seeing for the first time would not forget, and would wish to see again.

His hair was golden, and clustered in short curls beneath his tarpaulin, his eyes were deep blue, the face was beardless, and every feature was full of expression.

His form was seemingly slight, yet his movements were as graceful as a woman's, and the broad shoulders, small waist, and firmly-knit frame indicated great strength and activity.

He was dressed with almost foppish neatness, in white duck pants, a blue flannel jacket, white shirt with broad turnover collar, and beneath which was knotted, sailor fashion, a black silk scarf.

The corners of the collar were ornamented with gold stars, upon either shoulder was an anchor of the same precious metal, set with precious stones, and around his tarpaulin was a ribbon of silver, in the front of which were ruby letters forming the words:

##### "SEA WIZARD."

About his waist was a belt of silver links, to which, by a chain of the same precious ore, hung a gold-hilted cutlass, while a pair of handsomely-mounted pistols were ready at hand for quick use if need be.

Upon one of these his hand now rested, as though to carry out his threat, by shooting the one of whom he was jealous.

He half drew the pistol, but, as though changing his mind, said:

"No, I'll take no advantage of even a rival."

"But I will face them!"

So saying, he placed his hand upon the window-sill, and, though it was level with his breast, sprung lightly into the room.

"A pretty tableau this for a lover to see his sweetheart engaged in," he said, with sarcasm, as he sprang through the window.

Lily uttered a slight cry of alarm, and Robin Sherwood half-sprang to his feet, somewhat startled by this sudden intrusion.

But the intruder seemed also taken aback, for what he had taken for a love-scene he now saw was one of kindness, for Lily was standing by the side of the young officer, as he sat upon the settee, and with her deft fingers was skillfully dressing the several wounds upon his head.

"Carroll!" cried Lily, flushing and paling by turns.

"Lily, upon my honor I beg your pardon, and yours, too, sir, and I will frankly admit that I doubted my sweetheart here, for she seemed to be fondly caressing you."

"But I humbly admit my mistake, and, instead of sending a bullet into your heart, as I intended, sir, for I am a jealous lad, I offer my hand."

There was something so noble about the dashing young sailor, so winning in his manner, and frank in his confession of what he had believed and intended that Robin Sherwood grasped the outstretched hand and said earnestly:

"For my part you are wholly forgiven, sir, but this lady saved my life, and brought me wounded to her home, and is now kind enough to be my sweet nurse."

"My name is Robin Sherwood, sir, captain of the late American brig-of-war, Quickstep, for she is now a wreck."

"And my name, sir, is Carroll Gray, like yourself a sailor, and I am glad to meet you," was the frank response.

As for poor Lily, she seemed almost unnerved, and seeing it the young sailor turned and said:

"Have you no welcome for me, Lil?"

"Yes, Carroll. You know that you are always welcome," and Lily spoke in a manner so constrained that it was painful.

"Well, it does a sailor's heart good to be welcomed after a cruise. But, Lil, go on with your good Samaritan work, while I hunt up your mother, whom it would not surprise me to find dressing the wounds of another handsome man;" and with a light laugh, which showed that his jealousy had vanished, Carroll Gray left the room in search of Mrs. Lennox.

"For shame, Carroll," cried Lily, as he departed.

But when the door closed behind him, she suddenly burst into tears.

"My poor child, what is the matter?" said Robin Sherwood, in a kindly tone.

"Oh! that he should have come at such a time!" she moaned.

"Why, I should think you would be glad to see your lover at any time."

"No, no! I wish he had remained away."

"Or that I had not been here?"

"No, I do not mean that; but I am sorry that you saw him here."

"Why?"

"I cannot explain, sir; do not ask me."

"There! I was foolish to cry, and I will behave myself now; but you will forget all you

have seen here as soon as you have gone—will you not, sir?" and she looked imploringly into his face.

"That is a hard thing to ask me, for I can never forget you," he said softly.

She dropped her eyes, and then said, innocently:

"You will forget all else, sir?"

"Yes, if you will let me remember you."

She made no reply, and he asked softly:

"May I remember you, Lily, and some time see you again?"

"Don't ask me."

"But I do ask it."

"Yes," and she turned quickly away.

"One question, Lily."

"Who is that young man?"

She did not answer, and he said:

"There is a famous free-rover known as the Sea Wizard, and that name he has on his tarpaulin."

"Yes."

"Is he a sailor on board?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Sometime he may be in trouble, and, if so, for your sake, I will do all in my power to save him."

"You are a noble man, Captain Sherwood, and I will answer you frankly, that he is captain of the Sea Wizard!"

"What?" asked Sherwood, in amazement.

"I tell you the truth."

"That mere boy the freebooter captain?"

"Yes."

"You astound me, for there is no pirate craft afloat better handled than the Sea Wizard, and no captain, I will frankly say, that is freer from red deeds, and more merciful in his victories than her commander."

"I am glad to hear you say that, sir, for Carroll Gray is the freebooter captain— Ah!" and Lily started as a knock fell upon the door of the sitting-room, for it was seldom that a visitor came to the lonely light-house.

#### CHAPTER XX.

##### THE FREE ROVER FRIEND.

"COME in!" said Lily, in answer to the knock, and having finished dressing the wounds of her guest, she stepped to one side.

The door opened, and in peered the evil face of Anchor Tom, while at his back was seen a crowd of men, evidently the entire force from the lair in the cedars.

"Well, sir, what do you want here?" asked Lily, coldly.

The man stepped into the room, followed by two others, and closing the door behind him, said in a sinister way:

"I had a leetle business that called me to see the chief, miss, and so I made my report to him."

"What have I to do with that?"

"You had everything to do with it, miss, for you kept us from sending the captain there to Davy Jones's locker."

"Well?"

"So the chief didn't like it, miss."

"I am responsible to him for my actions, sir."

"But he holds me responsible, miss."

"I will see him in regard to the affair myself."

"I have already seen him, miss."

"And what said he, Anchor Tom?"

"He told me I was a fool to be gulled by a girl."

"You are not the first man, nor will you be the last, my fine fellow, to suffer in that way," said Robin Sherwood, with a light laugh.

"Waal, I'll not be again, and as I have my chief's orders I'll carry 'em out."

"And what orders did he give you?" coolly asked Lily.

"To come and get the prisoner."

"And then?"

"To take him out upon the beach and carry out our intentions."

"To drown me?"

"Yes, cap'n."

"And you have come to carry out your orders?"

"Yes, cap'n; but you will have the consolation that your mother will get your body, for I shall carry it to her with tears in my eyes."

"Anchor Tom, leave this house at once with your cowardly comrades!" said Lily, sternly.

"Can't do it, miss, for I intends to do my duty this time."

"You refuse to obey?"

"I do."

"The chief shall hear of this."

"He'll back me up, miss, when he does."

"You know that he commands that I am to be obeyed."

"Not in this case."

"I tell you yes, and I will be obeyed," firmly said the girl.

"I am not to be bullied, miss."

"You are piping fight, are you, cap'n? Well, you shall have it."

"Come, lads; let us tame this clipper," and Anchor Tom threw open the door and in rushed his villainous comrades.

Quickly before them sprung Lily, while she cried in angry tones:

"Back! every one of you, for I command obedience by this badge!" and she snatched from about her neck a gold chain with a strange device clinging to it.

It was a serpent of emeralds, with ruby eyes, teeth of pearls, and a forked tongue of gold, a rare and costly trinket.

"The snake don't charm now, miss, for we has orders from the chief," cried Anchor Tom, and he made a movement toward Robin Sherwood, who had seized a chair with which to defend himself.

But just then the inner door opened and the freebooter captain stepped into the room, a look of surprise upon his handsome face.

"More company, I see, Lil."

"Am I invited?" he said, in a light tone, while Anchor Tom and his comrades seemed somewhat taken aback by his presence, which certainly was unexpected to them.

"Yes, Carroll; and I am so glad you have come, for Anchor Tom threatens to take Captain Sherwood off and kill him."

"Anchor Tom will change his mind," was the dry reply.

"No, cap'n; for I has orders from the chief."

"To kill this gentleman?"

"To drown him."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, cap'n."

"Well, I order you not to do so."

"I admit, you is the commodore, afloat, cap'n, but on shore the chief's word is law above all."

"I will be responsible to the chief for my actions, sir," sternly said the young rover.

"But he holds me responsible, cap'n, and I shall do as he says."

"One moment, Carroll," and Lily quickly told the story of the young officer's having been cast ashore, and all that followed, and then added:

"Now, Captain Sherwood has given his pledge, nay, his oath, and he will keep it."

"Ay, my oath upon that, or his heart lies while his face tells the truth," bluntly said Captain Gray.

"You may believe it all, cap'n, you and the girl; but I has my orders, and I'll report 'em in the morning as being obeyed," doggedly said Anchor Tom.

"If you and your cut-throat gang lay hand on that American officer, by the heaven above, I'll cut you down where you stand!" cried the young freebooter captain, in clarion tones.

Robin Sherwood fairly started at the ringing voice, and, in spite of his being a freebooter, mentally admitted that he never saw a grander man, than at that moment he appeared.

At first the band shrunk back before his thrilling words; but Anchor Tom was not one to be thwarted from any evil purpose, and turning to his comrades he called out:

"Messmates, must we be beat back by the cap'n, who has no voice ashore, big as he be on salt water?"

"No!"

The word rolled out of every mouth determinedly.

"That is your decision, is it?" cried the freebooter captain.

"It is."

"Then the sooner you begin to obey orders, the better," and springing to the window, he raised the gold hilt of his cutlass to his lips, and gave one long, piercing whistle.

Instantly it was answered in the distance; but, as though satisfied to stand the brunt of the fight himself, Carroll Gray sprung before the desperate crew and faced them, a pistol in one hand, his cutlass in the other, while he cried lightly:

"All hands ahoy to obey the chief's orders!"

#### CHAPTER XXI.

##### THE QUEST OF A PIRATE.

"Look out for him, lads, for he is death with blade and pistol."

"Don't hurt him, but take the prisoner!" cried Terror Tom, and one of his men, more eager than the rest, sprung forward to lay his hand upon the arm of Robin Sherwood.

But he fell in a heap upon the floor, crushed down by a stunning blow of the young officer, who brought his upraised chair upon his head with deadly effect.

At the same instant another made a like attempt, to utter a shriek of pain, as his hand dropped at his feet, severed at the wrist by a sweeping cut from the freebooter's blade.

At the same time Lily, armed with a pistol, placed herself by the side of her lover, who cried in his light way:

"Get back with the captain, Lil, and give me room to swing my cutlass."

At the same moment his pistol flashed and a third member of the gang was out of the fight.

"My compliments to you next, Anchor Tom," cried the freebooter captain, advancing upon that worthy.

But Anchor Tom held opinion that he would like to live to fight another day, and bounded back among his men, who, taking his action as a hint to retreat, went pell-mell out of the door backward, dragging their comrade, who had lost a hand, with them.

"Clear the decks of your dead, lads," shouted Carroll Gray, seizing the two dead pirates, the one slain by Sherwood, and the one he had shot, and tossing them out of the door, which he quickly closed, just as there came the sound of rushing feet without.

"They are coming back reinforced," said Captain Sherwood, quietly, rising and grasping his chair again.

"No, those are my brave Wizards."

"Wizards ahoy!" shouted Carroll Gray.

"Ay, ay, sir! Wizards on deck!" was the cry in a cheery tone, and into the room bounded a young officer, followed by a score of gallant tars.

He was older than his captain, and had a reckless face, marred by vice, while he was dressed like his commander, with the exception of wearing silver ornaments instead of gold.

The men wore white pants, blue shirts and red tarpaulins, and were armed thoroughly, and a daring, gallant-looking set of tars they were, not one of them being over thirty years of age.

"Bravo, lads! but the battle's ended, the enemy has run off, and if they have left their dead, you can bury them, for lifeless hulks are no sights for the eyes of fair ladies.

"Come, Jean, let me present you to a gentleman and a sailor, one who may some day hang you and me to the yard-arm of the brig-of-war Quickstep, but who is my friend for all that, even if he puts the noose about my neck."

"Captain Sherwood, this is my first luff, Jean Oudry, a good fighter, a thorough sailor, a general fellow, but a bad man."

Robin Sherwood smiled at this off-hand introduction, and grasped the hand of the freebooter's lieutenant, who said, pleasantly:

"I am glad to meet Captain Sherwood, of whom I have often heard; but sincerely trust it may never be his pleasure and my misfortune to meet under circumstances such as Captain Gray suggests."

"It would be a bitter misfortune to me, sir, to have to sentence to death a brave man, though he wore on his brow the brand of pirate," answered Captain Sherwood with feeling; and turning to the freebooter captain, he continued:

"Captain Gray, I regret exceedingly that my presence here should have caused trouble, which I fear may be visited upon Miss Lennox and her mother, and bring you into disfavor with your chief, for such I judged from what I heard."

"My dear captain, do not speak of it, for my chief must accept my explanation of the affair, while those wretches dare not visit upon this little household their hatred."

"But I tell you frankly, sir, you are not safe here, for I have to depart by dawn, and those fellows will return for you, so allow me to carry you to your home?"

"You, sir?" asked Robin Sherwood, in surprise.

"Yes, captain."

"But my home is in New York, sir."

"I am aware of that, for I have often passed by it and admired its look of solid comfort and happiness."

"But I cannot permit you to risk yourself, sir."

"There is no risk, sir, I assure you, for my vessel is the Peggy Younglove, out of the Kennebec, and bound to New York with lumber."

"The wind is very fresh from the west, and I can land you within two hours, for the Peggy is a fast craft, and it is early yet, and then you will be safe."

"I thank you, sir, and I will accept of your kind offer."

"It is for the best; but pardon me if I ask that all that has passed here, and which you have discovered about us, may be as an unwritten page to you."

"It shall be, I assure you, for I have given my oath to Miss Lennox to that effect."

"I can ask no more, sir."

"Now, when you are ready, we will start."

"I am at your service now, Captain Gray, as soon as I have bidden my kind hostesses farewell, and thanked them for all they have done for me," and he turned to Mrs. Lennox, who just then entered the room, having been absent during the turmoil upon a duty she never forgot in storm or calm, for it was a visit to a lonely grave in the cedars near by.

In a few earnestly spoken words Robin Sherwood thanked the mother and daughter, and in grasping the hand of the latter said, softly:

"I owe you my life, Miss Lennox, and the debt shall never be forgotten."

"Don't move, captain, for I'll borrow the settee, and return it before dawn."

"Come, lads, up with that settee, and carry it aboard ship, and some day the captain may lift you too, but it will be at the end of a rope."

"Oh, Carroll!" cried Lily, but the pirate tars laughed lightly at their captain's joke.

"I'll be back in a few hours, Lil, and will

meet you at the chief's, for it is important that I see you."

"Good-night, Mother Lennox," and doffing his tarpaulin, the gay young freebooter left the light-house cottage, and followed his men to the beach.

The cot with its human freight was then placed upon one boat, and towed by another out to the vessel that lay offshore a cable's length.

Then the boat was hauled up to the davits, and the settee being lifted off, Captain Sherwood, of the American navy, found himself on board a pirate vessel.

But there was nothing about the craft, from what Sherwood could see, to betray her as an outlaw vessel, for her decks were covered with lumber, and the sprightly, well-dressed tars having gone forward, only a few uncouth specimens of seamen could be seen, just such a crew as would be expected to man a coasting craft such as the Peggy Younglove professed to be.

"Up with the anchor, Oudry, and crowd on the Peggy's clothes, for I wish to make the run as quickly as possible."

"Here, lads; carry the captain to my cabin, and send my steward to me."

The order was obeyed, and Robin Sherwood found himself in a small cabin, most plainly furnished, and with two stern lights.

A negro then entered with a bottle and glasses, but the rover captain said:

"Silas, we are not entertaining a Yankee skipper, or Custom-house official, so get out the silver and our best liquors and wines."

"Yes, massa cap'n," responded the negro, and he soon reappeared bearing a silver salver, goblets of gold, and decanters of the finest cut-glass.

"And is this the vessel you cruise in, Captain Gray, and which has defied all pursuit?" asked Sherwood.

"Yes, Captain Sherwood; but in her rig of the Peggy Younglove, she is as different from her natural self as is sweet Lil of the Light-house from a fisherwoman."

"See!"

Stepping to one side of the cabin, the young freebooter touched a secret spring, and back slid heavy panels, revealing a vastly different scene, one which showed that the place they were in was but a box cleverly arranged to hide the luxurious cabin of the vessel.

Sherwood was dazed with surprise, while the young freebooter said with a laugh:

"Had I known I was to have had such a distinguished guest, I would have kept the Wizard under her own rig, and boldly taken the chances of running up unrecognized."

"Ah! we are in motion, and soon, my dear captain, you shall be at home— Ha! what trouble is that on deck?"

"Pardon me, please," and the young freebooter hastily left the cabin.

#### CHAPTER XXII.

##### WELL MET.

UPON reaching the deck, after hastily leaving Captain Sherwood in the cabin, Captain Carroll Gray, the freebooter, discovered that the confusion was caused by the coming on board of a personage who had just arrived in a boat, and who demanded to see the captain.

"Who are you, sir?" asked Carroll Gray, quietly, as he advanced to the man, who was held by two of the freebooters, for he had been seized to prevent his rushing into the cabin.

"You know me, Captain Gray, for I am Anchor Tom."

"Ah! and what do you want here?"

"I rowed out with two of my messmates to demand that you go to the chief with me and see if I was not right about the prisoner."

"Certainly. Mr. Oudry, put Anchor Tom and his messmates in irons, and keep them there until further orders," was the cool reply.

So saying, Carroll Gray returned to the cabin, and joined his guest, and to Captain Sherwood the freebooter host proved by no means an uncongenial companion, as far as his hospitality and society were concerned, and the only wonder in the mind of the American officer, was that one who was educated, refined, and seemed to possess a noble nature, could be the famous commander of the buccaneer craft Sea Wizard.

Sherwood remembered that he had often heard, and always taken with a grain of allowance, sea yarns of the cavalier pirate, his generous manner of treating prisoners, and that he never warred against womankind, while, if driven to fight for his own safety, he always gave a cruiser a good battle, and managed in some way to escape.

Having met him, he knew that the stories told of the noted rover must be true.

A few glasses of wine were taken together, and which, the freebooter said, with a smile:

"Were taken from a Spanish vessel that had a cargo of the precious liquid on board."

Then the rover took up a sword from a locked case, that stood on the port side of the cabin, from which he had drawn the slide, and said:

"Captain Sherwood, you will observe the hilt of this sword represents a snake, just such a

badge, only on a larger scale, as Miss Lennox wears about her neck.

"It protects the wearer, whoever he or she may be, from the Freebooters of Sandy Hook, and I beg that you accept it from me, wearing it in your sea battles, for some day fate may be against you in your battles with the free rovers, and then you will find that you are safe, whatever may be the fate of those with you."

"I am more indebted to you now, Captain Gray, than I have it ever in my power to repay, and this gift is one of very great value," said Sherwood, examining the beautiful weapon with its unique hilt.

"Oh! we freebooters get our gold and precious stones easily, you know, sir, and they have little value in our eyes," answered the young rover, with something like sarcasm in his tone; but he added:

"Take the weapon, I beg of you, as a souvenir of Carroll Gray."

Under the circumstances, Robin Sherwood could not but accept the gift, and then the rover proposed that they should go upon deck, and some seamen were called to carry up the settee.

The Peggy Younglove had already passed through the Narrows, and the lights of the Battery were just off the starboard bow, while she was bowling along at a most high rate of speed for a vessel of her seemingly clumsy build.

"Your vessel is very fast, Captain Gray," said Sherwood, admiringly.

"And very beautiful, too, sir, as her natural self; but now she is as much, if not more changed than my cabin is.

"Were the Peggy playing Sea Wizard now, you would see her fairly fly with this wind.

"See; we are in the Hudson now, and will soon drop anchor opposite to your home; so I will row ashore and let them know you are coming, while you follow more leisurely."

"I am giving you a great deal of trouble, sir, but I would like to have my mother aware of my coming, as my sudden appearance might startle her, for her nerves are not over strong.

"But you must not risk yourself ashore, sir."

The young rover laughed lightly, and calling away his gig, just as the vessel luffed up to drop anchor, he left her side, sculling himself ashore as he had done at Sandy Hook. He rowed to the landing of the mansion, where was a little pier, and springing ashore was advancing toward the mansion along the evergreen-bordered walk, when he heard feet approaching, and a voice say in a low tone:

"So far, good, Dan; and the old lady must pay our price to get the girl back."

"Yes, Doc, the gal is worth big money, and I'd knife her before I'd let her go for less."

Quickly Carroll Gray shrunk back into the shadow of the cedar trees, and saw in the darkness two men almost upon him, one bearing a burden in his arms.

He knew that some mischief had been perpetrated, and that a crime was intended, and, as was his wont, he interfered, and did it quickly.

Springing out of his ambush, he cut down one of the men with his sword, and then driving the hilt into the face of the other, seized his burden as he dropped at his feet.

"A woman as I live!"

"Enveloped in a heavy shawl, bound and gagged!" he cried, hastily, and in an instant the bonds were severed, the gag removed, and the shawl thrown aside.

"Oh, sir, from what have you not saved me?" gasped the one he had thus rescued, grasping his arm as though for support, and speaking in a low, earnest and sweet voice.

"From two unmitigated devils, lady, who, if I understood them aright had kidnapped you for ransom," was the reply.

"Yes, sir, I was walking upon the front piazza of my house when those men sprung upon me suddenly and bore me off, for I was powerless to resist."

"Are they dead, sir?" and she shuddered.

"I am afraid one is, lady, for he should have lived to be hanged."

"The other is merely stunned, but I'll fix him so that he will wait here for my return, for I was going to the Sherwood mansion."

"Indeed! I am Corinne Sherwood, and my mother will be most happy to join her thanks with mine for the great service you have rendered me."

"You are a sailor I see, sir?"

"Yes, Miss Sherwood, I am a sailor, and a very happy one to have served you."

"In the navy I suppose, sir, from your dress?" said Corinne, hinting to make him give his name, as she knew many officers of the service.

"Permit me to introduce myself, Miss Sherwood, as Captain Carroll Gray, of the Revenue service—that is I collect my own revenue," he added hastily, as if to excuse the falsehood.

But, not suspecting wrong, she did not understand his last words, and he having securely bound the second man he had felled, with a sash he took from around his waist, he offered his arm, and the two walked on to the mansion together.

"You were going to the mansion, you said, Corinne."

I the honor of your acquaintance and

fail to remember you, sir, for your voice seems familiar?"

"As you will recognize me, Miss Sherwood, upon reaching the light, I will say that we have met before, and then, as now, I was fortunate enough to be of service to you."

"Oh! I recall you now, sir."

"You are my truant rescuer from drowning one day a year ago, when my boat was run down by a schooner, and you sprung overboard and swam ashore with me."

"Oh, sir, you are a truant, for you promised to come and call, so that my mother and brother could thank you, and you never did so."

"Sailors' promises are always brittle, Miss Sherwood; but I am most happy to meet you again, and especially so in arriving as I did in time to punish those villains."

"Twice, sir, I owe you my life; but it was good of you to keep your promise in the end and come to see me."

"I was going upon a special service, Miss Sherwood."

"Indeed! I am curious to know what it is," she said, turning as they reached the piazza steps, where the hall lamplight fell full upon him.

Quickly he doffed his hat, keeping the rim bent over the name thereon, while he answered:

"I come as the bearer of pleasant news, for your brother, Captain Sherwood, will soon be with you."

"This is indeed welcome news."

"Come in and let my mother hear it."

"Will you not bear to her the tidings?" he asked, hesitatingly.

"No, for I insist that you do so."

As she spoke she drew him gently into the broad hall, and the next instant the young freebooter found himself in the grand parlors of the Sherwood mansion.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### THE RETURN.

HAD the young freebooter known just what he had to face in the parlors of the Sherwoods, it is doubtful whether he would have entered them, but retreated in good order, after leaving Corinne at the door.

Bailey was on hand ready to announce him, but Corinne saved him that trouble, for, leaning lightly upon the arm of the young rover, she entered the rooms, the worthy butler bowing at the door, and struck with admiration at the very elegant get-up and handsome face of the outlaw.

Within the parlors there were three persons, Mrs. Sherwood being seated upon a sofa engaged in earnest conversation with Colonel Bertie Grayson, while Celeste Cerras, who often spent days at the mansion, was idly running her fingers over the strings of Corinne's harp.

They were surprised at the coming in of a stranger with Corinne, and more so at his very striking appearance, and all three rose to their feet.

But Corinne allowed them no time for increased amazement, for she walked directly up to her mother, whose quick eye detected that something had gone wrong, and said:

"Mother, permit me to present to you Captain Gray, who you remember saved my life a year ago, and ran off before we could thank him, and to-night has rendered me another like service, for he rescued me from two kidnappers in the river garden, who were bearing me off, but not until he had killed one and wounded the other."

Had a bombshell fallen into the parlor it could not have created a greater excitement than the words of Corinne, for her mother drew her toward her affectionately, while Celeste and Colonel Grayson sprung to her side in alarm at her escape.

"My dear madam," said the freebooter, not at all nonplussed by his surroundings, "your sweet daughter overvalues my slight services, for I merely helped her out of the water upon the one occasion, and to-night was fortunate enough to come upon two villains who were running off with a precious burden, which a remark I overheard from one of them led me to believe was a human being kidnapped for ransom."

"I barred their way, and they gracefully yielded up their booty and beauty."

The frank manner and winning face of the young sailor created a favorable impression upon all; but then quickly flashed through the minds of Mrs. Sherwood and Colonel Grayson that he was a dangerous man to render service to a young girl like Corinne, and the ex-officer was jealous that he had not been the happy man to have thus rescued the maiden.

But Mrs. Sherwood, in spite of her scheming nature and *hauteur*, was a lady, and she grasped the hand of the freebooter in both her own, while she said:

"Captain Gray, you know not how I appreciate all you have done for my little girl, and I have often thought of the unknown gentleman who saved her life a year ago, and hoped to meet him to thank him with all the earnestness of a mother's heart, and I hope you were coming to allow me to do so to-night, when you

were so fortunate as to be in the river garden?"

Both Corinne and the young freebooter understood what there was beneath the surface of the last remark, and he quickly replied:

"I was coming, madam, to make known to you that I was the *avant courier* of your son, Captain Sherwood—"

"Oh, sir, what of my son?"

"He will soon be with you, madam."

"Thank God for that! but is he seriously injured?"

"No, madam, though badly bruised by his struggle for life amid the wreckage, and which temporarily prevents his walking, so my men are bringing him to you, as I would not allow him to exert himself."

"From my heart I thank you, Captain Gray."

"Corinne, at once see that Robin's rooms are prepared for him, and— But, captain, pardon me for being so remiss, and allow me to present you to Miss Cerras."

"Colonel Grayson, Captain Gray!"

Celeste Cerras frankly extended her hand and said:

"I have also to thank you, Captain Gray, for your gallant and kindly services."

Colonel Grayson, however, bowed coldly, for already he was jealous, and asked, as he glanced at the uniform of the young freebooter:

"Of the American service, did you say, sir?"

"No, sir, I did not say, sir," was the cool reply, as Carroll Gray turned again to Mrs. Sherwood, while Celeste Cerras smiled at the rebuff to the colonel, whom she did not greatly admire.

But the colonel felt vicious, and returned again to the attack with:

"Pardon me, sir, but failing to recognize your uniform, I asked the question."

"Not having seen the uniform before, Colonel Grayson, it is natural you should not have recognized it; but, as you seem desirous of knowing to what service I belong, I will tell you that I am a member of the Ocean Wave Club, and cruise wholly for pleasure," and turning to Mrs. Sherwood he continued, in his easy way:

"Your son, madam, I found in rather cramped quarters upon the beach, and so brought him up to the city on my vessel— Ah! he is here, now!"

Footfalls were now heard upon the piazza, and all went quickly into the hall, where, supported by two seamen, Robin Sherwood had just entered the house.

With a cry of joy the mother sprung forward to greet her son, whom his assistants helped to a sofa, and then for a few moments there were warm greetings from all, the servants pressing forward to welcome back their young and much-loved master.

"But where is Captain Gray?" suddenly asked Robin Sherwood, glancing around him.

"He seems to have departed without the politeness to say good-by," sneered the colonel.

"He has shown a remarkably fine sense of courtesy in departing quietly, as he cared not to break in upon a family reunion," quickly retorted Corinne, who just then entered the room.

"Ho, Grayson, you and Corinne spitting?" laughed Captain Sherwood, and the colonel bit his lips, while Corinne, seeing that it teased him, said:

"Captain Gray left his adieu, mother, with me, and his best wishes, brother, for your speedy restoration to health."

"I am sorry he thought it necessary to hasten away, and Bailey must look him up to-morrow, wherever he is stopping, and ask him to dine with us, for we owe him the deepest gratitude, my son," and Mrs. Sherwood went on to tell of his rescue of Corinne, which seemed fairly to startle Robin Sherwood, who said, in a low tone:

"God bless him for what he has done for you, Corinne."

"He is a noble fellow."

"And he was so kind to you, Robin, for he told us he found you upon the beach in unpleasant quarters and brought you up to the city."

"Yes, yes, he did."

"What is this Ocean Wave Club, of which he is a member, Sherwood?" asked Colonel Grayson.

"The Ocean Wave Club?" asked Sherwood, in surprise.

"Yes, so he said, for not recognizing his uniform, I asked him to what service he belonged, and he said the Ocean Wave Club, and that he cruised for pleasure," answered the colonel.

Robin Sherwood smiled, and answered:

"Ah, yes, he belongs to a fraternity of young gentlemen who form the Ocean Wave Club, and have a uniform of their own."

"Ah! wealthy yachtsmen," said the colonel.

"I understood him to say," put in Corinne, innocently, "that he was in the revenue service and collected his own revenues."

In spite of the dangerous ground upon which they were driving him in discussing the young freebooter, Robin Sherwood laughed and responded:

"True, sis, he is very wealthy, I believe, and collects his own revenues, for he has nothing else to do."

"Have you known him long, Robin?"

"No, mother, but his vessel put in where I was laid up for repairs, and he kindly brought me up to the city."

"And I have something to ask you about where you were, my son, for a young girl—"

"First, mother, send Bailey to see if Gray has gone, and then to a constable to take charge of the dead and alive kidnappers in the river-garden."

"Then, if you will let the doctor see me, and give me rest for a day or two, I will be ready to answer all questions."

"My poor boy, while we have been talking, you are suffering, and you shall at once be most tenderly cared for," said Mrs. Sherwood, and Bailey and the colonel aided the young captain to his room, while the coachman went to see if the vessel had sailed from its anchorage off the garden.

He soon returned and reported that the vessel was nowhere to be seen, and that the kidnappers were not to be found, but that he found a slip of paper pinned to an oar, which was stuck up on the pier.

It was addressed to Captain Robin Sherwood, and written in a bold hand.

Opening it, Sherwood read:

"MY DEAR CAPTAIN.—To save legal complications in the matter of the kidnappers, I carry with me the bodies of both, dead and alive, and Miss Sherwood need not fear that they will trouble her more."

"Every wish for a speedy recovery."

"Yours, "GRAY."

"What do you think Captain Gray will do with the kidnappers, Robin?" asked Mrs. Sherwood.

"Bury the one, mother, and—"

"String the other up to the yard-arm of his vessel," put in Colonel Grayson, in a sinister tone.

"It would serve the fellow right if he did, and I believe that Captain Gray is not a man to mince matters with such a villain," responded Robin Sherwood.

"You do not think he would take the law in his own hands, my son?"

"Mother, Gray caught the fellows in the act of bearing Corinne off, therefore he needs no proof of their guilt, and wholly to protect sis from appearing in a court of justice, he has carried the living man off with the dead one, and I thank him for it," somewhat warmly said the young officer, "and I guess we'll hear no more of the affair."

"Well, Sherwood, I'll say good-night; but if I can be of any service as a nurse, or in any way, command me," said the colonel, somewhat abruptly.

"Won't you stay, Grayson, for we can take care of you?"

"No, thank you, unless you need me."

"No, I am getting along all right; but I will ask a favor of you?"

"Of course."

"That you go on board my brig, or what is left of her, and report that I am still in the land of the living."

"You know Lonsdale, my first luff, I believe?"

"Yes, I have met him, and I will go early in the morning, for it is too late to-night."

A moment after he took his leave, and though he looked into the parlors to say good-night to the ladies, he found only Celeste Cerras there, for Corinne had disappeared.

"The girl avoids me of late," he muttered, as he left the mansion, "and it is all on account of this young club captain."

"By Heaven! he shall not thwart me with Corinne Sherwood, for I'll seek him out, quarrel with him, and kill him in a duel."

"Ha, ha! a good thought indeed, and one I shall take measures to at once carry out before the girl loves him," and Colonel Grayson seemed really delighted with his project, born of jealousy, as he walked on toward his bachelor quarters.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

##### THE FREEBOOTER CHIEF.

"STRANGE, very strange that the boy does not come, after my peremptory order for him to do so."

"Can his success have made him rebellious, I wonder, or has this Anchor Tom reported falsely to me?"

The speaker was the Hermit Wizard, whom the reader has already met.

He was talking aloud to himself, as was often his wont to do, and he was seated in his own quarters, which, as I have said, were upon the hillside of the Highlands, overlooking the Lower Bay of New York.

It was a rude home, yet withal a comfortable one.

A cabin of stout logs, built against the side of a cliff, with a rear door opening into a cavern much larger than the hut.

The cabin had a board flooring, was furnished with a couple of ship's bunks for beds, and the other furniture consisted of a table, several chairs, one of which was most comfortable, and in that one the Hermit was seated.

A cupboard was on one side of a large fireplace, and a book-case upon the other, containing volumes in several languages.

Charts of various harbors on the Atlantic coast of America and the Indies hung upon the walls, and in one corner was a stand of arms, consisting of muskets, pistols, and a number of swords of various kinds.

Outside the door, which was open, was a cage of snakes, a score in number, and loathsome, vicious-looking things, and sitting upon roosts about the cabin were various birds, an ill-omened raven, an eagle of vast size, a hawk and several parrots.

A jet-black dog lay in the doorway, and a monkey sat before the fire eying a pot on the hook in which something was cooking.

Hanging from the door-frame, and so that they would have to be pushed aside by any one entering or going out, were three perfect skeletons of various sizes; the smallest, that of a child, was white, the next size, a woman's bony remains, being painted blood-red, and the largest, of a man of herculean stature, was black as ebony.

The old Hermit never locked his cabin when away from it, and two hunters who had ventured near one day in his absence, and beheld the skeletons, the score of snakes crawling about the door, the huge black dog, the monkey and the birds, had bolted with the speed of deer from the fearful spot, and telling their story, no one else had had the temerity to go in that vicinity.

As the reader finds him now seated in his cabin, a ship's lantern swinging from the rafters and throwing its light upon him, and the flickering fire lighting up his face, he looked the fit companion of the weird crew of fowls, brutes and reptiles about him, for his eyes glittered, and his expression was one of diabolical malice.

"The boy is wonderful, I admit, as a sailor, and he rules men with a power that is remarkable.

"But I must keep him under, I must keep him under."

"I would be more afraid of him were he not in love with the girl; but she is an anchor to him, and which he will not break loose from."

"It is now two months since he has taken a prize, and I verily believe he thinks more of sailing about the seas than of capturing vessels."

"I must talk with him, and let him understand fully that I'll stand no trifling."

"Now what is all this nonsense about that girl saving the life of an American officer, and accepting his pledge not to reveal what he discovered?"

"Sherwood it was, who had been washed overboard from his vessel, Anchor Tom said."

"There was money in him, and she has taken a high hand in releasing him, taking him to the light-house, and then forcing the boy to defend his life when I sent for him."

"Well, well, the boy must soon be here, and then I shall know the truth of the affair, for he'll not lie, no matter what he has done."

"I'll see if I can discover his craft running across here, or his boat, for it is not right that he should keep me waiting while he tarries to talk nonsense to the girl."

So saying, the Hermit of the Highlands arose and started toward the door, when the swinging skeletons were thrust aside with a force that made them rattle, the dog sprung to his feet with a sharp bark, the monkey screamed with terror, the birds shrieked with fright, and the snake hissed savagely as a man suddenly stepped into the cabin and confronted the white-haired old wizard.

#### CHAPTER XXV.

##### THE HERMIT AND HIS VISITOR.

"WELL, grandfather, I have stirred up the animals from floor to roof, and you look as though my coming had given you a turn, too."

Such was the salutation of the intruder into the Hermit's cabin, as he threw himself into a chair and gazed smilingly around at the birds and brutes, who seemed now to recognize him.

"I was just going out on the cliff to look for you, boy, and your sudden bursting in upon me did surprise me; but where is your vessel?"

"At anchor in the Hook, for I ran over here in my boat."

"And kept an old man waiting up nearly all night while you tarried with your sweetheart."

"There, Sir Wizard, your black art has failed you, for I have not been talking love, but, on the contrary, doing good service."

"Ha! you have captured a prize?" said the Hermit, quickly, and with a flash of greed in his eyes.

"No, I saved one."

"I do not understand you."

"I'll explain, grandfather."

"I have just run down from the city, where I went to carry a wounded American officer to his home—"

"Captain Sherwood?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you mean to say that you have released that man?" angrily asked the Hermit.

"He was no prisoner of mine for me to release him," was the cool reply.

"You had him in your power?"

"Yes."

"Then why did you not hold him for ransom?"

"I will pay you from my earnings, the amount of his ransom, if you ask it; but I am no man to take a shipwrecked and gallant sailor and force gold from him," was the indignant reply.

"Boy, don't be a fool."

"I'd rather be a fool, than be guilty of an act as mean as you suggest, grandfather."

"Captain Sherwood's brig was thrown upon her beam-ends by the storm, and he cut out her masts to save her, when a middy went over with the wreckage, and in saving his life he was carried off."

"He was cast upon the beach opposite here, and Lily dragged him ashore, thereby saving his life, for he was bruised and banged up very badly."

"She intended putting him on board his brig, which lay in the Hook at anchor, when, while she was gone, one Anchor Tom, belonging to your vile crew of wreckers over in the cedars, took him to their den and intended to kill him."

"But Lil returned and again saved him from death, and he gave her his oath not to betray anything he had discovered while on the Hook."

"She took him to the light-house, and I came in to-night and thought I saw her caressing him, and very nearly took his life, believing her untrue; but she was dressing his wounds."

"While I was out talking to her mother, this Anchor Tom and his gang came in under full sail and were going to carry off the captain by your orders."

"I did so order, boy."

"Well, your orders were disobeyed, but not from intention on the part of Anchor Tom and his messmates to neglect obeying them, but because they could not help it."

"He returned and told me that you were there and killed two of his men and wounded another, and—"

"Pardon me, grandfather, but he told you wrong, for I killed but one, and cut the gold-stealer off of another."

"The gold stealer?"

"Yes; his hand."

"Ah!"

"The other man killed was felled with a chair by Captain Sherwood."

"He could not be so badly hurt," sneered the old Hermit.

"Yes, he was considerably used up; but he managed to swing that chair in a manner that broke it and the villain's head, too."

"As I expected Anchor Tom—whom, as an officer of yours, I cared not to kill, though I'll be less merciful the next time he gives me cause—would return after my departure and capture the captain, I took him on board the Peggy Younglove."

"The Peggy what?"

"Peggy Younglove; my vessel under her present disguise, sir."

"Go on with your story, boy, for I wish the truth."

"Well, sir; I took the captain up to his home, landed to let his mother know he was coming, and caught two villains running off with Miss Sherwood—"

"Ha! and what did you do?" and the Hermit sprang to his feet, his face full of excitement.

But the young freebooter remained seated and coolly responded:

"Run one of the rascals through, and knocked the other down."

"Boy, you have crossed my path in this work, for I sent those men to kidnap the girl and keep her hidden for me until her mother paid a large ransom for her return."

"Then you are a greater villain than I have ever thought you, grandfather," was the prompt response.

"By the Lord above! do you throw insults into my very teeth?" and the old Hermit dropped his hand upon his knife-hilt, while his eyes fairly blazed.

"Sit down, grandfather; keep cool, and don't talk at random, for you know you haven't had a tooth since I was a baby."

The old Hermit sunk into his chair, seemingly overcome by the cool impudence of the young freebooter, who went on in his same free-and-easy way:

"Well, your hireling kidnappers had put up a little game to keep the girl hidden for themselves, and thus get all the ransom-money."

"By Heaven, but they shall suffer for this!"

"Don't threaten the dead, grandfather, for I killed one, as I told you, and the other I swung up to the yard-arm as I ran down the harbor, after he had confessed his treachery to you and his villainies generally."

"You take a great deal upon yourself, boy."

"Have to, grandfather, for a man leading the life I do must act promptly in all things, and fearlessly too."

"And have you hanged Anchor Tom too?" sneered the Hermit.

"No, but I thought of doing so."

"Did he bear my message to you, demanding your instant presence before me?"

"Yes, grandfather, and I put him in irons, but will release him when I return on board my vessel."

"You are very kind."

"Yes, I do not care to be accused of being

mean and cruel, so I am on the side of kindness, and I thank you for discovering that I possess the virtue."

"Boy, you are a devil," shouted the Hermit, in a tone that made the raven croak, the parrots shriek, and sent the monkey flying under the table.

"All owing to my early training at your hands, grandfather."

"But come, sir, you are in an ill-humor, tonight, so do not let us quarrel, for I wish to make my report to you."

"First, tell me, didn't Sherwood pay Lily well for saving his life, and you for carrying him in your vessel to the city—yes, and the rescue of his sister?" asked the Hermit, with avaricious greed upon every lineament of his face.

"No, for Lily Lennox is no girl to take blood-money, and I don't run a ferry-boat to charge fares for passage, while, had he offered me gold for saving his sister, I should have most cheerfully knocked him down."

"You are a strange boy, Carroll."

"I take it as a compliment that you think so, sir," was the quick retort of the young freebooter.

"Tell me of your cruise, sir!" sternly said the Hermit.

"Well, grandfather, I ran down and fired upon a Spanish vessel the first night out of port on my last cruise."

"Aha, and Spaniards are always rich, so I suppose you got plenty of gold?"

"No, I got iron instead."

"Iron!"

"Yes, sir, for she was an armed vessel who laid a trap for me, and very nearly caught me in it."

"So you had to run for it?"

"Oh, no, I fought it out with her, and, as neither her plucky commander or myself would strike our flags, I sunk her, and she went down with her colors flying."

"In Satan's name, boy, what do you gain by fighting armed vessels?"

"I saved my neck from the noose in that case."

"Well, what more of your cruise?"

"I took an English clipper, but she was loaded with wool, so I let her go."

"And then?"

"I captured a Portuguese, and got nothing but a load of mahogany, so I sent her on her way."

"And then?"

"Captured a schooner out of Havana with molasses and sugar, and only took what we needed and let her go."

"Boy, you exasperate me, for here you are running after valueless vessels, when there are rich packet-ships running out of this port, and coming into it, to and from all parts of the world, and many of them bearing treasure of great value."

"I never claim toll from an American vessel, grandfather," was the calm reply.

"You never do what?" and the Hermit was again upon his feet in a rage.

"I never yet have taken a dollar from an American vessel."

"Do you mean this, boy?"

"I do."

"How dare you say this to me?"

"Because I dare tell you the truth."

"And for two years you have cruised the seas in the Sea Wizard, my vessel, and have never yet robbed an American vessel, although your worst foes are the cruisers of the United States?"

"That is just it, grandfather."

"I have taken what treasure I have turned over to you from English, Spanish, Mexican and French vessels, and the West Indian coasters, and whenever I boarded a craft and found she was really an American, I have let her go free and undisturbed."

"American cruisers, as you say, are my worst foes, for they dog my wake continually; but I run from them, without a shot in return for theirs, when it would take a much heavier craft in metal and men than my own to make me fly, if she carried a foreign flag."

"Boy, this is all nonsense, and I am sorry that I ever told you that you were an American."

"I tell you, Carroll Gray, you are holding too high a hand of late, and I have half a mind to take the vessel from you, place her under command of Jean Oudry, and set you adrift in the world."

"Do so, grandfather, and I will place my young hands upon your old head and bless you," was the very cool rejoinder of the young freebooter.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE SEA WIZARD'S PRIZE.

"CARROL GRAY, do you mean what you say?"

The Hermit asked the question in deep earnestness, looking straight into the face of the young freebooter as he spoke.

"I do mean it, grandfather, for I am not, in spite of your training, fitted to the work of throat-cutting and robbery."

"Who I am I know not, and you hold the secret."

"You say I am your grandson," and Carroll Gray arose and began to pace the floor, as though deeply moved.

"If I am, I say God forbid that it is so."

"Looking away back into the past I seem to remember a sweet face that was bent over me in love and kindness often and often."

"It may have been a dream of my infancy, yet still it is a dream I can never forget."

"After that remembrance there comes to me a time when I recall being upon shipboard with stern men, who seemed to treat me cruelly."

"Then followed a life upon a Cuban plantation for some years, with a man and woman that said they were my guardians."

"From some cause they began to drift about the world, and unloving me, and I hating them, yet they carried me with them to England, to France, and thus about the world, until one day, when I was fourteen years of age, I was told I was to be sent upon an American vessel as a middy."

"I went with joy, parting from my stern guardians with delight, and found myself a cabin-boy upon an American privateer, instead of a regular cruiser."

"Thank God, I was not devoid of pluck, and I worked my way up to a middy's rank in one year's time."

"Then the war ended between this country and England, and my captain refused to stop cruising, pulled down the American flag, hoisted the 'skull and cross-bones,' and turned pirate."

"It was no fault of mine that I became an outlaw, as I did, and I was glad that the schooner was wrecked on a reef, while running from a Spanish vessel-of-war."

"The captain and crew escaped to the shore, but I remained upon the wreck, was captured by the cruiser's boats, was strung up to the yard-arm, the commander not believing my story, and only escaped by my hands being so small that I slipped them through the irons upon them, dragged myself up the rope I was hanging by, and running along the yard-arm, sprung into the sea."

"It was blowing half-a-gale, darkness was coming on, and before the cruiser could be put about and boats lowered, I had escaped to a reef, and from thence to the land, which was not far away."

"Alas! it was an island, and a haunt of wreckers, and they made me one of their band."

"From wrecking they turned to piracy, captured a fine brig becalmed off the island one night, and made me a luff on board."

"Thus fate made me again a pirate, and it was years before I gave it up, much as I wished to."

"You remember how one night the ship in which I and my good resolves were, came ashore on yonder beach."

"You were there, rejoicing in the storm and wreck, saved my life, and in gratitude to you I became again a sea-rover."

"You told me that I was your grandson, when I told you my name, and you certainly gave me what I considered proof."

"So be it, I am sorry that I am, for, were I not, I would try and be a man who could look his honest fellow-men in the face."

"If you wish to take the vessel from me, do so, for you know my feelings, wholly, grandfather."

The young freebooter had spoken throughout in an earnest, forcible manner, pacing to and fro the while, with his hands clasped behind his back.

"No, no, my son, I was but joking, for you are the only man that could command her and escape capture."

"I love you dearly, as you know, and if you left me I would be an old hulk without masts or rudder."

"A few more years and I must lay me down to die, and then you can follow the bent of your own humor."

"You will have saved up a fortune—"

"Of stolen gold."

Unnoticing the sarcastic interruption, the old Hermit went on:

"You will have a fortune that I leave you, be married to that noble little girl, to whom I owe my life, and can become a very happy man."

"But for the present, Carroll, do not desert me."

"No, no, wait until I am gone," and the old Hermit spoke with deep feeling.

"Very well, grandfather, as I have been a waif, a child of fortune in the past, I may so continue, I suppose, at least for awhile."

"Thank you, boy, thank you!"

"But remember, sir, not an American vessel do I capture."

"You know best, Carroll, and certainly there are plenty of other vessels afloat that are rich prizes, though you have been sadly remiss of late in capturing them, and my agent up in the city has wondered greatly, and grumbled."

"What do you care for him?"

"He is a dangerous man, boy, and seems to feel that I am playing into the hands of some one else."

"How so?"

"That I send some one else the piratical booty, as he receives so little of it of late."

"Are you indebted to him, sir, that you care what he thinks?"

"Yes, for he secured for me the vessel you have."

"Ah! the Sea Wizard?"

"Yes, he had the craft built upon a model I gave him, and he paid one-half of her cost, for the price proved to be more than I had expected, and I just had a certain sum."

"Well, she has paid for herself over and over again, and you should have bought out your agent's interest in her."

"He would not sell out his share."

"Ah! offer him double his investment with interest."

"No, no, for that would be robbing myself."

"I can buy his interest in the vessel, sir, if you are willing."

"I am more than willing, but I am afraid, as you care so little for gold, that you have not saved up a very large sum."

"I have not, from my captures previous to this last cruise, saved up but little; but my last voyage has paid me better, and—"

"You don't mean the one you have just ended?" quickly asked the old Hermit.

"Yes, sir."

"I thought it had been unsuccessful."

"I did not say so."

"You implied as much?"

"No, I was going on to tell you of my captures, when you tacked off upon American vessels."

"And you have captured a vessel, a prize then?"

"Yes, grandfather, and one which, as I was going to say, I feel less compunction in sharing the booty of than I have that of other crafts."

"Quick! tell me, boy, what was the vessel, and what was the value of her prize?"

"She had a treasure on board."

"The amount! the amount!"

"Fully equal to all my captures in the past."

"Holy Neptune! Boy, you have excelled yourself."

"Grasp my hand, and then tell me all about your prize," and the sordid old Hermit sprung up with an agility that was remarkable, and wrung the hand of the young freebooter captain with a vim that made him wince.

"I'll thank you to return my hand, grandfather, now that you have crushed every bone in it," said the young outlaw.

"Forgive me, my boy, but I was so delighted with your story."

"What was the craft, Spanish, English or French?"

"Neither."

"Mexican."

"No."

"Portuguese or Brazilian?"

"No, sir."

"You astound me, for what else could she be, unless she was—"

"Italian?"

"No, sir."

"Ah! she was a Dutch trader?"

"She was nothing of the kind."

"Name her nationality then."

"Mongrel."

"Mongrel?"

"Yes."

"I do not understand you, boy."

"She had a Spanish captain, French and English lieutenants, and her crew was made up of all the nationalities of the earth."

"In short, my dear grandfather, the prize which I captured was a pirate!"

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE SEA WIZARD SETS SAIL.

THE strange man known as the Hermit of the Highlands had one ruling passion in life, and that was the accumulation of gold.

His had been a strange existence, and he had been a roamer far and wide in the world; but above all the greed for gain was paramount.

He had sinned deeply for it, and when he placed his greedy grasp upon the precious metal, no matter how it was obtained, his heart forgot all sorrows and troubles and became happy for the time, until the thirst for more came again upon him.

When, therefore, Carroll Gray told him that he had captured a rich prize, and that that prize was a pirate vessel, his eyes fairly glowed with delight, and he almost danced before the young freebooter.

"Tell me of it, Carroll, my noble boy, tell me of it!" he exclaimed, joyously.

"There is little to tell, sir, more than that many high-sea acts have been committed under the name of the Sea Wizard by a noted pirate—"

"It helped you the more, my boy, for it added terror to your name."

"A thing I desired to avoid, and hence I punished the perpetrator of the deeds with which I was charged."

"Served him right, Carroll, if you took his gold."

"But who was he?"

"Vesper, the Pirate."

"What do you mean you captured his craft?"  
"Yes, one of them, his schooner, under his Lieutenant, Reinforth."

"It was this schooner that Vesper had commanded, and I believed him to be on board, so I signaled that it was war between us."

"He answered:

"Yes, to the death."

"Then we began the action, and I made him strike in fifteen minutes, although he was my equal in men and guns; but of course my craft was the larger."

"Reinforth was killed, and I regretted that Vesper was not on board; but learned that he had fitted out a large and fleet brig, manned it with a large crew, and was to come upon my cruising ground."

"The crew of the schooner I paid well, took a few to add to my complement, and landed the others at the Cape Fear, while the craft, which was badly worsted by my fire, I sunk—"

"And the gold?" gasped the Pirate Hermit.

"Oh! I transferred that of course to the Sea Wizard."

"And where is it now?"

"Beneath the cabin flooring of my vessel."

"Right, boy, right!"

"And it is valuable?"

"Oh yes."

"When will you deliver it?"

"I shall put to sea now, and return in a few weeks, and in the mean time I wish you to fit up the old schooner for me."

"What, my old Flying Arrow?"

"Yes."

"She is laid up in a creek up the Shrewsbury."

"I know it, sir; but put men to work upon her at once, and wholly refit her."

"She is hardly seaworthy."

"That makes no difference."

"What do you intend to do with her?"

"I have a little plan on foot, and will use her in it."

"It is not likely that I will go to sea in her, only up to the city."

"The Sea Wizard needs overhauling, and when I return I shall lay her up in the inlet for repairs, and use the Flying Arrow."

"Boy, you have some scheme on hand."

"So I said."

"Is there gold to be made?"

"I shall let you know the result."

"But you had better land the treasure before you put to sea, for it is risky."

"No more for the treasure than for myself and crew."

"If you have to mourn my loss, you can throw in an extra tear for the gold."

"I have no time to lose now, so good-night, grandfather."

"God speed you, my boy."

"A fine sentiment that to throw after a pirate," sneered the young freebooter, as he left the cabin, greatly to the relief of its brute and fowl denizens, who had had their rest broken through the night by his coming.

Dashing the skeletons aside, he drew his cloak around him and hastily descended the hill to the beach below.

There his boat awaited, and springing in he hoisted his sail, and went flying across the waters to his vessel.

The Sea Wizard, in her guise of a Kennebec lumber vessel, rode at a single anchor with sail spread, and as Carroll Gray hailed a long way off, she was under way by the time he ran alongside.

Dawn was just breaking as Jean Oudry met him at the gangway.

"Well, Jean, did you carry the settee back?"

"Yes, captain."

"And saw Lily?"

"Yes, sir, and told her you would be unable to see her before you sailed."

"Thank you."

"Now head for open water and then down to the cruising-ground of Vesper, the Pirate, for I have a score to settle with him," and Carroll turned his glass upon the light-house, which still sent its eye of fire out over the waters, growing light beneath the coming dawn.

"Strange that I do not see Lil, or get a wave of farewell from her," he murmured.

"Never before, in darkness, or storm even, has she allowed me to sail at any hour of the night without a wave of her lantern in farewell."

"I wonder if she has found out that her love for me is a mistake, as I have done."

"Ah me! what the future holds for Carroll Gray, God only knows," and the young freebooter descended into his cabin, while the fleet craft went bounding upon her way.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

##### A SAIL DOWN THE BAY.

"Ah, brother Robin, are you going to be so selfish as to run off for a sail and not take me?"

The words were addressed to Captain Sherwood by his sister, one pleasant afternoon several weeks after his arrival home.

He had fully recovered from his injuries, and been feted by his admirers and friends in the city until he was heartily tired of it all.

His brig was undergoing repairs, and in a couple of weeks more would be ready for sea, and then he had set for himself a duty to perform in hunting down the Magic Ship, and solving that terrible mystery of the ocean.

For awhile, as nothing more had been heard of her it was hoped that she had sunk, or disappeared; but only a few days before vessels had come into port, chased in by the Magic Ship, their captains said.

In refitting his vessel, Captain Sherwood had adopted a new idea in naval rig, and which he had borrowed from the Magic Ship.

That was he had his masts set perpendicular, with no rake whatever, and not made to tower high in air, and with immense booms and spars, which would give her a tremendous pressure below, near the decks, to the better act upon the hull and force her through the waters.

He had added to her armament, had enlarged his crew, and felt that no fleetier craft, better armed and manned and stancher vessel would be afloat than would be the Quickstep, when she started upon her cruise for the Magic Ship.

Upon the day in question, when hailed reproachfully by Corinne, Robin Sherwood was just about to cast loose from the pier, in his little yacht, a sloop-rigged craft of three tons' burden.

He was dressed with remarkable care for a cruise upon the waters in a small boat, and had told the boatman, who he said need not accompany him, to say to his mother that he would not be back until late.

When Corinne appealed to accompany him, his brow slightly clouded, but instantly after he called out:

"Come on, sis, for I will take you with me."

"You dear, good fellow," cried Corinne, and she sprung lightly down upon the deck of the yacht.

"Cast off, Horn," called out Sherwood, and the boatlegs threw the painter on board, and the yacht went flying away under pressure of a stiff breeze.

The wind came from over the Jerseys, and was most favorable for a run up and down the harbor, and that seemed to be the course which Sherwood had set for himself.

Presently the yacht of Colonel Bertie Grayson hove in sight, just rounding to at her anchorage, and as the hook was let fall the little sloop sped by.

The colonel was upon her deck, just about to get into his boat to row ashore, having evidently just returned from a sail.

He raised his hat, and seemed about to ask to form a trio in the little yacht, when Corinne called out quickly:

"We will not ask you to join us, Colonel Grayson, as you have just been sailing."

The dark face flushed, and the man made no reply, only bowed as the sloop shot on.

"You silenced Grayson with that shot, sis," said Sherwood, with a smile.

"I intended to," was the low reply.

"You did not care to have him accompany us, then?"

"I certainly did not, brother."

"Strange, when he is an acknowledged lover."

"It is a match of my mother's making, brother, not mine."

"Ah! then you do not love the colonel?" quickly asked Sherwood.

"Frankly, I do not, nor did I ever love him."

"I liked him, admired him, feared him, hated him, if you can understand that paradox, brother mine."

"Yes, I can understand the feeling, Corinne," answered her brother, dryly.

"And which is the predominant passion you hold for the colonel now?"

"Indifference."

"That is a bad state of affairs for a maiden who is to marry soon."

"It is, I admit."

"But what can I do? I have urged and pleaded with my mother, but all in vain, for she will not allow me to sever the engagement."

"I am glad I know of this, for I will see what I can do."

"I will at least have the marriage put off for a year, and in that time we will see what changes take place."

"Brother, from my heart I thank you for those words," said Corinne, earnestly.

"And, brother," she continued, after a moment of silence and deep thought, "will you pardon me if I say that I hope you will not marry Celeste Ceras?"

Robin Sherwood started and asked:

"Why?"

"She is no more suited for you than is Colonel Bertie Grayson to me."

"You think so, Corinne?"

"I do, and I feel that if mother had not made the match, you would have looked elsewhere for a woman to make your wife."

"Celeste is very beautiful, Corinne."

"Yes, very."

"And accomplished."

"True."

"And has a lovely manner."

"Ah, yes; but if is the rosebud hiding the thorn."

"She loves you, I believe, and she is ambitious."

"She could look higher than to wed me, sis."

"Yes; she might win an admiral, or a general; but they would not have your wealth, and she expects you to rise high in rank in a very few years."

"Well, sis, I frankly confess that Celeste is not wholly my *belle ideal* of womanhood, and now I will make known to you a secret."

"I will be glad to hear it, brother Robin."

"I was running off alone this afternoon because I had a visit to make."

"Then I am sorry I came."

"Oh, no; I am glad that you are with me, for I can trust you."

"I hope so, brother."

"Do you remember how mother questioned me about the young girl, who brought to her the news that I was not dead?"

"Yes, brother; and I remember that you stood your cross-examination well, for I saw that there was something behind it all that you would not tell."

"Celeste hinted as much, too, but mother accepted your explanation."

"My explanation was simple, and to the effect that the one who brought the message to my mother, cared not to be known as a heroine, and hence refused to tell that I was at the home of her mother."

"She was a beautiful girl, brother, and so pure and innocent," said Corinne.

"So I think, sis."

"Then she had the courage to face both mother and the colonel," and Corinne told her brother just what had happened when Lily of the Light-house had called at the mansion.

Robin Sherwood laughed, and then said:

"Well, sis, I am going to make a duty call upon that young girl and her mother, and you shall accompany me."

"Oh, I would so love to, brother! But where does she live?"

"You have heard of the Lily of the Light-house?"

"Yes, indeed; and she is a heroine, for she has saved many lives, and won also the title of the Belle of the Breakers."

"Yes."

"And was that innocent-looking, modest, lovely girl, that heroine?"

"Yes, sis."

"Why, I had pictured the Lily of the Light-house as a tall, rather masculine, handsome woman, able to pull an oar with a man, and wholly different from the sweet little sunny-haired maiden who came to the mansion that night."

"Why, I could love your Lily—I mean the one you refer to, brother, if I was a man," said Corinne, with enthusiasm.

"So could I," dryly rejoined Robin Sherwood, and having passed through the Narrows, and getting the wind fresh from the westward, the young captain laid his course for the Sandy Hook light-house.

The sloop was a fast sailer, and had all the wind she wanted, without a reef in her sails, so that it was in less than an hour after dropping the Narrows astern, that Robin Sherwood luffed up alongside the small pier near the light-house.

Lily had seen him coming, and that he was not alone, and came to meet her visitors, for the handsome uniform of the captain had caught her eye afar off.

She was dressed in her jaunty sailor-suit, and tripping along with light step and rosy face.

"Well, Miss Lennox, we meet again, and I have brought my sister to see you," said Sherwood, grasping the little sunburnt hand.

"I am glad to see you, Captain Sherwood, and most happy that Miss Sherwood should have done me the honor of calling upon me," responded Lily, in her soft, musical voice.

"I am also happy, Miss Lennox, to greet the one to whom we owe it that my brother lies not at the bottom of the sea, for he is the idol of our hearts, and our home would have been desolate without him," and Corinne's voice quivered as she spoke, while, in her impulsive way, she kissed the rosy lips of the light-house maiden with pure affection.

Leading the way up to her home, Lily ushered her visitors into the cottage, and Mrs. Lennox came forward and gave them welcome in her pleasant way, and an hour was passed most charmingly.

#### CHAPTER XXIX.

##### CAUGHT IN A SNARE.

At last Sherwood rose to start upon their return, and both Mrs. Lennox and Lily escorted himself and Corinne to the beach.

Lily walked by the side of the captain, while Corinne was accompanied by Mrs. Lennox.

"Do you see that vessel-of-war lying yonder, Captain Sherwood?" asked Lily, pointing to a large armed craft that was at anchor up the Hook.

"Yes, I observed her as I came down, and was going to ask you what she was."

"She looks like a Spanish cruiser."

# The Magic Ship.

"She may be, but I do not like her looks."

"Why?"

"She hovered in the offing all day yesterday, and last night, when the New York and London clipper went out, I saw flashes in the darkness, and the deep booming of heavy guns followed, and then the sound of fighting at close quarters."

"This morning she came in and anchored where you saw her, and I saw with my glass that her fore-topmast seemed to have been shot away."

"She cannot be a pirate, for there is no buccaneering craft afloat of her model and size, that I know of."

"Perhaps it is the Magic Ship," said Sherwood, with a smile.

"What do you know of the Magic Ship?" asked Lily, quickly.

"Nothing more than that she got me into all my trouble, and that as soon as my brig is ready for sea I start upon a cruise to hunt her down."

"Have you ever seen her?"

"Yes."

"Do you know aught of her, Lily?"

"I know that she has the appearance of being a very weird craft, for I have often seen her off-shore at night, and I beg of you that you grant my request, and do not pursue her," said Lily, earnestly.

"I am sorry I cannot grant your request, but my duty forbids."

"Now, when I return to the city, I shall throw my crew on board an old brig there, that is laid up for repairs, and run down and see just what that fellow is."

They had now reached the beach, and farewells were spoken, and the brother and sister set sail for home.

"Brother, yonder comes a vessel," cried Corinne.

"By Heaven! it is the cruiser, and she is under sail, and must come near us," cried Robin Sherwood.

But he held on his course for awhile, and then, from the bows of the armed vessel came a puff of smoke, and the roar of a gun followed, while a shot flew shrieking over the bows of the sloop.

"That means lay to, and I shall promptly obey."

"But do not be alarmed, sis," said Sherwood, as he luffed up into the wind.

Soon after the stranger came near, a boat was lowered and sent to the sloop, and Robin Sherwood was ordered to come on board the cruiser, and bring his sister with him.

He did not like the looks of the officer, or his men, but could only obey; but he asked:

"Is not this strange treatment, sir?"

The officer, evidently a Spaniard, and who spoke with an accent, answered:

"It is the desire of my captain, señor, to see you, for he has put into your harbor in distress, and would like to ask your advice."

"This then is a Spanish cruiser?" said Sherwood.

"Mexican, señor."

"Ah!" and Sherwood glanced at the rather mongrel style of uniform worn by the officer.

Arriving alongside, the young captain and his sister were ushered up the gangway, where they were met by a man evidently the commander.

His attire was foppish in the extreme, and seemed to be a mosaic of all the naval uniforms of the civilized world, for while he had the bell-seamed pantaloons of the Mexican, he wore the coat of an English admiral, with Spanish designations of rank.

A Greek turban was upon his head, at his side hung a Turkish cimeter, and his pistols, three in number, were of American manufacture, and of the dueling pattern in use at that day.

His face was also a mosaic, for all the vices in the calendar of crime, it seemed, were indelibly stamped thereon.

With a smile intended to be genial, but which missed its aim and was devilish, he said in Spanish:

"The señor and señorita Americanos are welcome on board my poor vessel."

Relying in Spanish, which he spoke fluently, Sherwood responded:

"I would have been better pleased, señor, had you asked what questions you wished answered by hail, and not felt it necessary to almost order myself and sister upon board your vessel."

"Ah! señor, it was to enjoy the pleasure of your society, I wished you here."

"Come into my cabin with me, that I may extend a glass of wine."

Sherwood did not like the man, and more, the crew looked a thorough case of "like master, like man."

But he was powerless to resist, and knowing that Mexico was remarkably lax and backward in the way of a navy, he excused the manners and the general appearance of the specimen afloat of that nationality, whom he had the misfortune to meet as he did.

So he went to the cabin, escorting Corinne himself, for she shrank away from the Mexican.

"You will kindly not detain us, señor, on board, unless it is your intention to run up to

the city, for I desire to get home before sunset," said Sherwood.

"I am anxious to ask the señor a few questions; but first let me offer a glass of wine—the pure juice from old Spain."

A villainous-looking servant entered with glasses and decanters, and pouring out a really excellent quality of Spanish wine, the host said with his sinister smile:

"Now, señor, and señorita, I drink to your pleasant cruise with *Vesper, the Pirate!*"

With a cry of alarm poor Corinne sunk forward unconscious and slipped to the floor, while, with the spring of a panther, Robin Sherwood was upon the outlaw.

But a number of men rushed from the after part of the cabin, and rescued their commander from instant death, for in the fury of the moment the young American would have killed him, having already torn the cimeter of the pirate loose from the belt.

Realizing that resistance was vain, Sherwood submitted, and was placed in irons, while, as the vessel headed seaward, through the stern ports he saw his little sloop a mass of flames, flying away before the wind.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE WARNING.

STANDING upon the beach, watching the departure of her guests, and somewhat anxious regarding the strange cruiser, which she saw weighing anchor and setting sail, was the Lily of the Light-house.

Her mother had returned to the cottage, leaving the maiden thinking over the pleasure of her visit from Robin Sherwood and his sister.

As the vessel headed on a course that must necessarily bring her near the little sloop, Lily grew more anxious, and running up to the cottage she called to her mother and expressed her fears.

Then the two stood in the shadow of the light-house and attentively watched what followed.

With pale faces they saw the shot thrown over the yacht's bows, and then beheld the two occupants taken on board the vessel.

Still they hoped that nothing was wrong.

But suddenly Lily uttered a piercing cry that caused her mother to seize her arm in alarm.

"My child! my child! what is it?"

"See! see, mother!"

"The vessel is getting under way again and heads seaward!"

"Oh, mother! do you not see the flag that she has just run up?"

"It is the black flag.

"God have mercy upon them!" groaned Mrs. Lennox.

But now Lily seemed to be herself again, for she cried:

"Quick, mother, aid me to get ready, for I shall run right up to New York."

"But what good can you do, Lily?"

"The crew of Captain Sherwood are there, and they can be thrown on some vessel to go in pursuit."

"I will at once make known the news."

"It is yet several hours before dark, and if you will keep watch which course the pirate takes, her rate of sailing, and distance from here at sunset, I will tell the officer to run in close and hail you, so that you can tell him."

"Now, mother, good-by."

While she was talking Lily was getting ready and ten minutes after her surf-skiff was bounding up the harbor.

It was a stiff wind for so small a boat to carry full sail; but with sand-bag ballast to windward, and herself lying over on the gunwale, she held on her way the little craft, seeming to fly over the waters.

Yet to Lily it appeared to stand still, and the minutes dragged by like hours.

When the Narrows shut off the wind a little, she became fearfully nervous; but when at last she ran alongside of the brig-of-war Quickstep, and saw that the sun had yet some distance to travel to the western horizon, she knew that she had made wonderful time in her run up.

Lucas Lonsdale was pacing the deck of the Quickstep, overlooking the men in their work, and saw her coming.

He recognized her as the same maiden he had seen at Sandy Hook, and went forward to receive her, wondering at her coming, for that the brig was her destination he knew there could be no doubt.

"Sir, I bring you news that a pirate craft has captured Captain Sherwood and his sister," shouted Lily, as she came within hail.

"Good God! what did you say, miss?" cried the officer, springing upon the bulwarks.

"Captain Sherwood and his sister were sailing below the Narrows, sir, and were overhauled by a large pirate craft, taken on board, their yacht burned, and the buccaneers then put to sea."

"Ho, lads! to the rescue!"

"All hands ahoy!"

"Seize your arms, lower away the boats, and come with me to board yonder old brig, in which we shall sail to the rescue of your captain!"

Like sounding brass the voice of Lucas Lonsdale rang out, and a wild cheer broke from the brig's crew.

"The pirate hoisted the black flag, sir, when she set sail."

"She is about four hundred and fifty tons, carries five guns, eighteens, I think, to a broadside, and a heavy pivot-gun fore and aft, while she has a crew of fully a hundred men."

"She is a trim sailer and was making about five knots with this breeze and had only her light sails set."

"Bravo! you are a born sailor, miss!"

"May I ask your name?"

"Lily Lennox, sir, and I live at the Sandy Hook Light-house, which please run in close to and hail, and my mother will tell you what course the pirate took, and how far distant at sunset."

"I thank you, Miss Lennox, for your kindness, and I will get yonder old brig in pursuit in half an hour."

"She is old and needs repairs, but she is said to be a fast sailer, while her armament is good, and heavier than that which you say the pirate can boast."

"Farewell, Miss Lennox, and I only wish I could have you for a lieutenant on the cruise."

The last words were called out, as Lily was already moving away in her skiff; but she luffed up as Lonsdale hailed her.

"Would you be good enough to inform Mrs. Sherwood of this sad affair, and ask her to send word to the officials?"

"The Sherwood mansion is a large, white villa up the river—"

"I know the place, sir."

"Good-by, and success attend you!" cried Lily, as she let her sail fill once more and headed toward the Hudson, for the Quickstep was lying over upon the Long Island shore of the East river.

As she ran into the pier of the Sherwood mansion, Lily glanced down the river and clapped her hands with delight, for she beheld the brig just shooting into view below the Battery, and her decks and rigging crowded with men, who were setting sail with a rapidity that showed they were in deadly earnest in the chase of the pirate.

Watching her a minute, until she pointed down the harbor, and 'felt the wind fair on her starboard quarter, Lily muttered, as she hastened to the house:

"The brig is a good sailer, and Heaven grant that she overhaul the pirate, for oh! what agony must poor Miss Sherwood and her brother suffer!"

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### LILY AGAIN VISITS SHERWOOD MANOR.

MRS. SHERWOOD sat alone upon her piazza, enjoying the evening breeze.

She saw the little skiff through the foliage, as it ran in to the pier, and at first thought that it was the yacht returning with her son and daughter, for the boatman had told her that the captain and Corinne had sailed away together.

As she saw Lily approaching, she recognized her and hastily arose, for one of those presents of evil which often come to us seemed to suddenly fill her heart.

Lily was very pale, for her excitement even had not brought color to her face; but she was calm outwardly, and bowed politely, while she said:

"Mrs. Sherwood, once before I was the bearer of good news to you, and now—"

"Oh, speak! tell me what has happened, for I feel that something awful has occurred to my poor children!" and Mrs. Sherwood sunk back into her chair, for she was unable to stand.

"My dear Mrs. Sherwood, Captain Sherwood and his sister are both alive, only they were captured by a vessel while sailing in the lower bay."

"Captured by a vessel!" gasped the unhappy woman.

"Yes, madam; a craft that had anchored in the lower bay."

"I saw the vessel bring their yacht to, and them go on board."

"And then? and then?"

"The vessel stood out to sea, and a large ransom will doubtless be demanded for their freedom."

"The vessel was a smuggler then?"

"It was an outlaw craft, madam," evasively assured Lily.

"Oh, God! what will happen to my children?"

"But how know you this, girl?" quickly asked Mrs. Sherwood, and also there was a tinge of suspicion in her tone.

"I live at the Sandy Hook Light-house, madam, and saw them captured, and their little yacht burned."

"Then I sprang into my surf-skiff and ran up to the city, and over to the brig-of-war Quickstep, and told the officer in charge all that had occurred."

"You are a brave, noble girl; but alas! the Quickstep cannot put to sea."

"No, madam, but there was a brig-of-war lying near her with guns and a small guard

crew on board, and your son's lieutenant at once boarded her with all of his officers and men, and as I landed at your pier I saw her headed down the harbor under clouds of canvas, and she is very fleet, so have hope of the speedy return of those you love, Mrs. Sherwood."

"Bless you, my child, for your words of hope."

"Come! show me the vessel in chase."

Lily led the way quickly to the pier, and there, nearly down to the Narrows, and faintly seen in the gathering twilight was the pursuing brig.

Taking her glass from her skiff the maiden gave it to Mrs. Sherwood to look through.

"Yes, I see her now distinctly, and her decks are crowded with men."

"God speed you, brave Lonsdale, in the chase, and Heaven aid you in your good work!"

"Amen!" fervently said Lily, and then she continued:

"Now, Mrs. Sherwood, the lieutenant asked me to break the news to you, and request that you inform the city officials, and perhaps another vessel may be sent in chase."

"Gladly will I do so, and I am so dazed with grief, or I would have spread the alarm at once."

"Come with me, my child, to the mansion, and I will dispatch my servants at once upon the errand."

"No, madam, for I must return home, as my mother expects me, and is all alone."

"No, you must not go alone, and at night."

"Wait, and I will have Colonel Grayson sail you home in his yacht."

"No, indeed, Mrs. Sherwood, for I am not afraid, and I am a good sailor."

"Good-night, madam, and do not lose any time in giving the alarm to the Government officers."

Without another word Lily sprung into her skiff, cast off the painter, and was borne swiftly away, unheeding the cry of Mrs. Sherwood, who, seeing that she was powerless to detain her, waved a farewell and ran rapidly toward the mansion, nerved to busy action by the news she had heard, and a desire to do all in her power to aid in the capture of the daring buccaneer who had boldly entered the lower harbor in broad daylight and carried off those most dear to her.

And, while the alarm was spreading through the town, and merchant vessels, in the absence of vessels-of-war, were being hastily armed to go in chase of the pirate, Lily was sailing homeward through the darkness, guided by the beacon in the light-house tower, where she knew her loving mother was watching and longing for her return.

#### CHAPTER XXXII.

##### THE PIRATE'S CAPTIVES.

It was hard, very hard for Robin Sherwood to realize the fearful situation in which he and his sister were placed.

He would, for himself, rather have been slain than that Corinne should have fallen into the power of the pirate, and he blamed himself that his growing infatuation for the light-house maiden had gotten his sister into such a fearful situation.

Once she recovered from her swoon, and she showed a nerve and spirit that was wonderful under the circumstances, and said to her brother:

"The pirate has but taken us for ransom, for I overheard one of his officers say that a seaman on board recognized you as he went to the light-house."

"Yes, ransom can be his only object, knowing that I am rich, sis, and he shall have it, if it takes my entire fortune to free you."

"And yourself, brother?"

"He may have my life if he desires it, if he will only release you, my dear sister."

"No, no; we go or remain together, Robin."

And thus the two talked over their dire misfortune, for Captain Vesper had left them alone in the cabin with the remark:

"Captain Sherwood, I am like the cat; I love to torture before I strike, so I will take my time in deciding what I will do with my valuable captives."

"The cabin and the quarter-deck are at your service, so make yourselves at home, please."

"Devil! a day of retribution yet may come," hissed Sherwood.

As the pirate vessel passed out into the ocean, Robin Sherwood, who was gazing from the cabin stern ports, suddenly started and said:

"Sis, do you see yonder little sail?"

"Yes, brother."

"It is the surf-skiff."

"Well?"

"You see but one occupant in it?"

"Yes."

"It is the Lily of the Light-house."

"Oh, brother!"

"Yes, and she has seen our capture and is flying up to the city to give the alarm."

"Brave, noble girl!"

"Indeed she is, Corinne, and I feel most hopeful now, for Lonsdale will move heaven and earth to come in pursuit, while Mrs. Lennox can tell him which course the pirate has taken."

"But the Quickstep is far from ready for sea, brother."

"True, yet there is a brig-of-war just put out of commission, lying near the Quickstep, and she has only a small guard on board, and Lonsdale will take her."

"Just see how the surf-skiff flies!"

"I am afraid Lily is carrying too much sail for this wind; but she knows best what her boat can do."

Together they watched the surf-skiff until it faded from sight in the distance, and then Sherwood said:

"Corinne, sis, the old villain gave us the privilege of the quarter-deck, so let us go there, as I wish to see just what this craft can do."

"She appears to sail well, brother."

"She does; there is no denying that fact; but Lonsdale will give her a hot chase, once he sights her, and carry the old brig's sticks out but what he catches her."

"Come!" and the two went on deck.

The pirate chief greeted them with a sinister smile, intended for one of welcome, and then asked Sherwood what he thought of his vessel. "She is too fine a craft to be commanded and manned by a pirate and his vile gang," was the prompt rejoinder.

"The Señor Sherwood seems to forget that he is not upon his own deck," said Captain Vesper, savagely.

"You are mistaken, Sir Pirate, for the fact could not escape my mind with you before my eyes."

The outlaw turned away, and the brother and sister were left alone until night fell upon the sea, when they were invited down into the cabin to supper.

Feeling that it would only make matters worse to reply, Sherwood determined to curb his temper and his tongue, and they descended to the cabin.

Corinne was given the seat of honor upon the pirate's right, and her brother sat opposite to her.

To their surprise the buccaneer chief suddenly became pleasant in his manner toward them, talked of matters wholly foreign to their capture, and the meal was ended without an angry or unkind remark or response.

Treating Corinne with easy politeness, Captain Vesper assigned to her use his own state-room, while he occupied one of the two smaller ones upon the port side of the vessel, the other being given to Robin Sherwood.

And thus the night passed away, and dawn came to find no vessel in sight.

The day went by and night again came on, and time was told by light and darkness until two weeks had passed away.

In that time the pirate had made several captures of almost valueless vessels, as far as booty was concerned, and Sherwood had an opportunity of knowing that he was a cruel monster, and that the stories told of Vesper, the Pirate, were not forecastle yarns alone.

He also discovered that the pirate vessel was a remarkably fast sailer, fully as fleet as his own Quickstep, and behaved well in a blow.

One afternoon, during the third week of the captives' stay upon the pirate vessel, a sail was sighted off the starboard bow.

The brig was running briskly along on a northerly course, not far from the Delaware coast.

At the first glance Sherwood hoped that the vessel was a cruiser; but as she lifted he saw that it was a merchant craft, and a large clipper ship.

Soon after his experienced eye told him just what she was, and he said to his sister, who stood by his side:

"She is one of the Philadelphia and Wilmington freighters, and sometimes there is treasure sent by them, which the pirate doubtless knows, for he is pressing on all sail in chase."

"I hope she may escape," fervently answered Corinne, whose captivity had taken the bloom from her cheeks, and brought a look of sadness to her eyes in spite of her plucky spirit.

It soon became very evident that the pirate captain considered his prize might prove a valuable one, as such freight-carrying clippers were often used as the bearers of more valuable merchandise than their bills of lading gave them credit for.

The sailing qualities of the buccaneer craft soon showed themselves, for the brig rapidly overhauled the clipper, although she seemed to be a white cloud flying low on the sea, so crowded was she with canvas from deck to truck.

"Corinne, yonder craft is armed," said Sherwood in a low tone to his sister, as his practiced eye detected something about her that suggested that she was not an unarmed craft.

"A cruiser, brother?" asked Corinne eagerly, and with hope.

"No, but a vessel whose owners consider it best to have her captain able to defend his ship."

"She has, doubtless, a few light guns, and a crew of perhaps thirty men, but they will be of little use against this horde of villains, I am sorry to say."

Being now within range, the pirate chief ordered a shot thrown over the clipper.

The gun was fired, the iron ball went shrieking on its course, and buried itself in the sea near the clipper's bows.

But the vessel held on her way without noticing the hint to come to.

Again and again were shots fired, but with a like result.

The fire now was poured in heavily upon the clipper, hitting her now and then, and cutting down a sail or two, yet still the plucky commander of the vessel refused to lay to.

Rapidly the brig gained upon her, and when at musket-shot range, the clipper suddenly luffed up sharp, and poured a broadside of light guns upon the pirate.

The guns were well aimed, and cut down a number of the crew, one of the shots passing between Corinne and her brother.

"Come, Corinne, you must go below," cried Sherwood, anxiously seizing her arm.

"No, brother, I will not move from here be the result what it may," was the determined answer, and in vain was it that he tried to persuade her to seek safety in the cabin, for the clipper now poured in a hot fire, as she lay to, and the brig was rushing down to board her.

The fire made almost a maniac of Vesper, the Pirate, for he shouted to his men to show no mercy when they should board her.

A moment more and the brig was laid alongside the clipper with consummate skill, and the grapnels were thrown and the vessels made fast to each other.

Then over the high bulwarks swarmed the pirate crew, and in ten minutes more the battle had ended.

Half an hour passed, and then Captain Vesper appeared, and sprung back upon his own vessel.

His face was livid with rage, and he shouted in revengeful tones:

"Not a peso do I get from the accursed craft, and I have lost a dozen good men."

"By Satan, but her captain and his crew that are alive shall pay dear for this."

"Ho, there, you accursed hounds!

"Lock those prisoners in the ship's hold and set the accursed craft on fire!"

"Ay, ay, sir," was the answer, and in a tone as though the speaker rather enjoyed the anticipated torture to be visited upon the victims.

"Ah, sir, do not prove yourself a fiend in human shape!" cried Corinne pleadingly.

"Silence, girl!"

"Corinne, speak not to the wretch, for as he punishes, so shall he one day meet punishment," sternly said Sherwood.

The remark brought the fury of the pirate chief upon the young officer and turning toward him, he fairly shouted:

"Ho, man, you shall now meet your doom, for I have not settled my score with you."

"Oh, no, for I owe you many a debt, as you have chased me from sea to sea, and once caused me to run my schooner ashore to escape you."

"Ho, men! seize that man!"

Several of his crew rushed upon Sherwood, who made no resistance, for he feared he might be cut down, and his sister left to the mercy of the pirates.

Quickly irons were placed upon his wrists, his hands being drawn behind him, and his ankles were also manacled, though poor Corinne dropped upon her knees, and with clasped hands begged piteously for him.

But the pirate was maddened by his losses, and his disappointment in not getting booty, and shouted:

"No, girl, I will not spare him."

"He shall be strung up at the yard-arm within the hour, and you shall see him die!"

"Oh God! hast Thou indeed deserted us?" shrieked Corinne, and tottering toward her brother she fell at his feet in a swoon that seemed akin to death.

#### CHAPTER XXXIII.

##### AN APPARITION.

WHEN Corinne Sherwood recovered consciousness, darkness had settled upon the sea.

The clipper had been separated from the brig, and with her sails set and helm lashed lay off a little distance, barely visible in the gloom.

But, upon her decks suddenly flashed up a light, and it was seen that a fire had been built there by the pirate crew.

"Now come on board with that boat and we'll sail away!"

The voice of the pirate chief rung in the ears of the recovering girl like thunder, and she turned her half-dazed eyes upon him, and then upon her brother.

He stood beneath the yard-arm, a rope about his neck, and with his cruel executioners ready to obey the orders of their more cruel chief.

With a shriek Corinne sprang toward him, but she was seized by two under officers and held securely.

"Oh, man! do you intend to commit this crime?" she cried, turning to the chief, upon whom the light of a battle-lantern fell.

"I certainly do intend to hang him, girl, and then sell you back to your mother for the very highest price she considers you worth," was the cool reply.

"Spare him, and you shall have a fortune!" she cried.

"No, I think more of my revenge against him than I do of gold."

"But you will bring me a round sum," was the sinister response.

The unhappy, almost crazed girl gazed at her brother.

He stood calm before his foes, his face white and stern, and his eyes met her own with love, while he said:

"Corinne, you are my heiress, and use my fortune in buying your freedom from this incarnate fiend."

"Remember to tell Lonsdale how I died, and tell him too that my last order was that he should hunt yonder inhuman brute, Vesper, the Pirate, to the same doom that he visits upon me."

"See, his demons have kindled a slow fire upon yonder ship and human beings are beneath her decks, so do not fail to tell Lonsdale that, too."

"God bless you, my sister, and good-by."

The brave man spoke in a voice that did not quiver, and like a statue stood his sister gazing upon him.

"Now, Vesper, the Pirate, do your worst, for I am ready to meet the death you condemn me to and God have mercy upon yonder poor men whom you have sentenced to a far worse end."

The pirate chief laughed mockingly, and then cried:

"Now, girl, see how I avenge myself upon an enemy."

"Ready there, men—*God in heaven behold!*"

The last words broke from the pirate's lips in a shriek of terror, and he pointed his trembling sword over the starboard beam.

A yell broke from every man whose eyes beheld what their chief did, and the sound took the shape of:

"*The Magic Ship!*"

"Ho, devils! fly to your posts, all!"

"Let her meet the wind, helmsman!"

"Crowd every stitch of canvas on her, if it pulls her sticks out by the roots!"

"Spring, you dogs—spring to your work, for the devil sails yonder ghost of a lost ship, and he'll roast you all if he once gets within hail!"

Never did men work as did that pirate crew, and falling off until every sail set would draw, the brig fairly leaped over the waves as though a thing of life and was herself frightened at the fearful and weird craft coming toward her.

Left alone by his intended assassins, Robin Sherwood had hobbled to the side of his sister, and she threw her arms about him with a moan of sorrow and joy commingled, and the two stood gazing in speechless amazement at the sight which had caught the eye of the pirate, just in time to save the young officer from being swung up into the rigging.

What they beheld was a ship coming over the waves at a terrific speed, and heading directly toward them.

Although the night was very dark, the vessel was plainly revealed by a weird, greenish, misty light that hovered about her from her hull to her topmasts.

White as snow were hull, masts, rigging and sails, and the only man visible upon her decks stood at her helm, and he, too, wore a ghostly-looking uniform.

Her ports were open, and her guns were run out, and they, too, were white.

In fact, a more spectral-looking object could not be found upon the face of the waters, and that she was an apparition, the ghost of a vessel, not a man of the pirate crew doubted.

One and all of them had heard of the Magic Ship, and of the superstitious belief that she was a lost vessel that could never reach port.

Some said that her captain had sworn to make port by a certain date, or that Satan should have his soul, his vessel and his crew.

He had failed, rumor had it, to make the designated time, and he was doomed to cruise havenless over the seas, after the devil had punished him by taking his human form and making a ghost of him, his vessel and his crew.

The worst of all was that the rumor went that any vessel giving chase to, or being chased by, the Magic Ship, was doomed to misfortune of some kind.

That same craft Robin Sherwood had seen when in the Quickstep.

He had given chase to her, and disaster had certainly followed for himself, his crew, and the poor seamen who had been washed overboard.

That the pirate chief and his men were now frightened half out of their wits was evident from the fact that Captain Vesper yelled vociferously for the keys of the irons that were upon Robin Sherwood's ankles and wrists, and unlocked them himself with trembling fingers while he cried:

"Man, are you leagued with Satan, that you conjure up yonder apparition to save your life?"

"Yes, and your master, Satan, is coming on hot in your wake, my dear captain," answered Sherwood, coolly.

"Bid that phantom vanish, man, and I'll land you and your sister at the nearest point," cried the chief.

"I have no such power, Sir Pirate."

"As you are a pet of Satan, he certainly should not harm you."

Captain Vesper found no consolation in this and he went among his officers and crew; but their terror was even greater than his own.

Suddenly, to the surprise of all, the fire upon the clipper's deck, which had been gradually gaining, and before long would have enveloped the ship in flames, went out as one would snuff out a candle.

This the pirate attributed to the Magic Ship also, and especially as that weird craft put about and sailed back toward the clipper ship.

A sigh of relief, that fairly filled the sails, went up from the pirate crew at this, and they breathed the freer as the strange, ghastly light about the vessel suddenly vanished and all was darkness upon the sea.

But on the pirate brig continued her flight, her crew hardly daring to look astern, and conversing in suppressed tones together.

"Ho! the Magic Ship!"

It was Robin Sherwood who uttered the words in his ringing voice, and every eye now beheld the weird stranger to windward off the starboard quarter, and yet further off from the brig than when she was last seen.

About her was the same weird light as before.

But a startled cry broke from the pirates as they suddenly beheld that the Magic Ship had undergone a metamorphosis.

*From a full rigged ship she had become a brig!*

The terror now broke out afresh among the conscience-haunted crew of the pirate craft, many were upon their knees trying to recall the prayers they had known in innocent childhood, a few were groaning in agony of spirit, and some had decamped below decks, unable to view the horrible specter.

That the Magic Craft was gaining upon the brig, fleet as she was, all could see.

Nearer and nearer she drew, gradually edging closer to the pirate, until by midnight she was within hailing distance.

As silent as though the breath had left their bodies the pirates waited, dreading a hail.

But soon it came, for a tall form, clad in white, sprung up into the main shrouds, and loud rung his hail:

"Ho the brig!"

No answer was returned, and then came the words in thrilling tones:

"*For the love of God tell us how to reach port, for we are lost! forever lost!*"

Still a deathlike silence upon the pirate craft, and then the Magic Ship forged ahead.

"Ready about!" cried Captain Vesper, in suppressed, trembling tones, and the brig at once put about to get away from so phantom-like a companion upon the dark waters.

The Magic Ship to the relief of all, did not follow in the brig's wake, but suddenly out went her weird light, and she was lost to the sight of those whose eyes had been riveted upon her.

Long and anxiously they gazed upon the waters, and at last felt that they would not again see the hideous phantom that night.

"Go to the cabin, sir, with your sister," said Captain Vesper, his courage rising when the Magic Ship was no longer in sight, and he continued:

"And you remember, sir, that to-morrow you shall die, for the Magic Ship cannot come by daylight to save you."

With this fearful foreboding upon them the brother and sister left the deck to bemoan together the cruel fate that had overtaken them.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

##### THE THREE-MASTED SCHOONER.

WITH the first dawn of day the voice of the pirate chief was heard hoarsely calling.

"All hands on deck to witness execution!"

Quickly the crew obeyed, and again was Robin Sherwood to be brought face to face with death.

"Sail ho!"

The cry fell with startling effect upon all, for they had not forgotten the Magic Ship.

"Whereaway?" yelled the pirate chief.

But there was no need of asking the question, for coming up rapidly astern was visible a large three-masted schooner, and she was not more than a league away.

That she was armed there was not the slightest doubt.

Her hull and her heavy rig was evidence of that.

That she had seen the brig from the first glimmer of dawn all knew, and that she was in chase was evident.

"To your posts!" shouted the pirate chief, and then he examined the three-master closely through his glass.

"Do you know yonder craft?" he asked of Robin Sherwood.

"I do not."

"She appears to be a cruiser."

"Yes, she is armed."

"Well, we can drop her if we wish to," said the pirate, in a confident way.

"She is holding her own now with you, and has not half the canvas set she can carry," coolly said Robin Sherwood.

"By Heaven, but you are right."

"Ho there! crowd the clothing upon the

brig," yelled the pirate chief, and as the men went into the rigging, he continued, addressing Sherwood:

"Again luck has postponed your hanging, Captain Sherwood; but you are to die as soon as I get out of range of yonder cruiser."

"I get iron instead of gold from that kind of craft, so care not to fight him, though I believe I could easily silence him— What is it, Paddock?" and he turned to a junior officer who approached him in an excited way.

"Do you not know yonder craft, Captain Vesper?"

"No."

"I do."

"Well, out with her name, nationality and flag."

"Her name will tell all."

"Well, what in Satan's name is she?"

"*The Sea Wizard!*"

The pirate captain fairly sprung into the air at this announcement, while he cried:

"Do you know this?"

"I do, sir; for I was on a vessel she captured."

"Ah, yes, the Sea Wizard is reported as a three-master, and they say her captain keeps all his treasure on board, so I'll risk a fight with her."

"Bah! there is no risk, for my vessel and crew cannot be defeated."

"Your vessel can be overhauled though, I see," said Sherwood, significantly, in spite of the pinching Corinne gave him to keep quiet.

"What do you mean, sir?" angrily asked Vesper.

"Simply that yonder craft has gained half a mile upon you since she was first sighted, and she has not spread an extra sail."

"Holy Neptune! but you are right."

"Well, I need just such a craft, and anything that can outsail this brig I will fight hard for."

"Put her under fighting sails, Paddock, and send the crew to quarters!"

The orders were promptly obeyed, and then the brig was put about, and the two vessels were now approaching each other at a lively pace.

"Corinne, we are saved!" said Sherwood, in a low tone.

"What do you mean, brother?"

"I mean that the man that commands yonder craft will soon be master of this one."

"Ah! brother, do not be too confident," sighed the maiden.

"I know the man, therefore I am confident."

"Come, let us go below, for this deck will be no place for you soon, and as I can be of no use to our friends, I care not to be shot down upon a pirate deck."

Hobbling along as he could, for he was again in irons, Sherwood led the way to the cabin, no one, in the excitement of the moment, observing their departure.

The brig was now within a mile of the three-masted schooner, which the pirate officer had said was the famous rover the Sea Wizard, and Captain Vesper called out:

"Men, you remember that yonder craft destroyed my schooner, killed your comrades, and took what treasure Captain Reinforth had on board."

"She is our bitter foe, she is fleet as the wind and her hold is filled with rich booty, so let us take her for our own vessel!"

These words of the chief were greeted with a yell, and the entire crew were now armed to the teeth and ready for the fray.

"Ready at those bow guns there!"

"Ay, ay!" came the stern response.

"Give him a sample of our metal!"

The guns burst forth together, and two iron messengers went flying on their way, but went wide of the mark.

"Curse you for blind lubbers! if that is the way you fire he'll knock us out of the water before you can hit him," yelled the chief, and again the guns were fired.

Yet the aim was little better than before.

"Luff there at the wheel! luff sharp!"

"Now give him a broadside!" shouted the chief.

The order was promptly obeyed, and with better result, for the shots were seen to strike the hull and sails of the three-master.

But the enemy had not yet replied, but came bravely, her men at their guns.

"Now keep those dogs barking!" ordered the chief, and every gun that could be brought to bear upon the coming vessel was kept firing as incessantly as possible.

Still the foe did not reply, but came grimly on, and in her silence there was a menace that made the pirate crew feel uncomfortable.

The wind was blowing about four knots, the sea was almost waveless, and that the stranger meant to come to close quarters there was not the slightest doubt.

Nearer and nearer came the stranger, until the brig luffed quickly and poured in a double-shot broadside, which Captain Vesper hoped would cripple his foe fearfully.

But it failed to do so, and, sweeping around quickly, the three-masted schooner's sharp prow was laid alongside the starboard quarter of the brig.

"Boarders ahoy!" yelled the pirate chief,

somewhat taken aback by the sudden and unexpected maneuver.

But the current of evil humanity which he had hoped to board the stranger with, suddenly recoiled before a terrific onslaught of boarders from the schooner, and gaining a footing upon the pirate's deck, they drove all before them, cutting down mercilessly men who had never known mercy to others, and led by one who seemed to bear a charmed life, they swept forward, an inevitable stream of death.

Cries of quarter were unheeded, pleadings for mercy were answered with death-blows, and in ten minutes after gaining the deck of the brig she was in the hands of Carroll Gray, who had led his gallant crew to victory.

Bound securely, Vesp'r, the Pirate, stood before his captor, who asked:

"Where are your captives?"

"In the cabin, safe and well."

"Jean Oudry, see if this man speaks the truth."

The young officer walked aft quickly, and soon returned and reported:

"Miss Sherwood lies in a swoon upon the sofa, and her brother, ironed hands and feet, is kneeling beside her, sir."

"That is enough."

"Hang this man to the yard-arm of his own craft!" was the stern reply.

The pirate captain knew that to beg for mercy was useless, and he uttered no appeal, but from his lips, as Jean Oudry fastened the noose about his neck, came the words:

"I feared disaster after we were hailed by the Magic Ship!"

"Up with him!" shouted Carroll Gray, and the next moment the cruel pirate was dangling at the brig's yard-arm.

Then the young captain coolly walked aft and descended to the cabin, and he carried in his hands the keys he had taken from the belt of Vesper, and which he knew would unlock the irons that bound Robin Sherwood.

Softly he descended the companionway, to be greeted with a hearty:

"God bless you, Gray! I knew you would be the victor."

"Come, Corinne, here is your old rescuer, Captain Gray, who has placed us under another debt of everlasting gratitude."

The face of Corinne Sherwood was white as that of a corpse, when the young sailor entered the cabin, for she had just recovered from a deep swoon of joy, for when her brother had told her the pirates had been defeated, it was too much for her, after all the excitement she had undergone.

But the blood rushed into her face in torrents when Carroll Gray grasped her hand and said:

"I am happy to meet you again, Miss Sherwood."

"And they said your vessel was the Sea Wizard, the pirate cruiser, you know," said Corinne, and her brother put in quickly:

"They did not know, you see, sis, for it proves to be Captain Gray, and he has saved my life and yours, for had the old pirate hanged me, I know the shock would have killed you."

"Yes, brother, I could never have lived after it; but was the chief captured, Captain Gray?"

"Yes, Miss Sherwood, and I was cruel enough to hang him."

Corinne shuddered as she said:

"A fitting fate; but I did not know that you commanded an armed vessel."

The young freebooter looked embarrassed, and Sherwood quickly said, coming to the rescue:

"It is lucky for us, sis, that he does."

"But tell me, Gray, how did you know that we were on board the pirate?"

"I put into Sandy Hook a week ago and Lil told me all, and that your officers and crew had gone in a vessel in pursuit of Vesper, but failed to find him, and so I put to sea to try my luck."

"But come on board my vessel, for I can offer you pleasanter quarters than these."

The invitation was gladly accepted, and the irons having been knocked off, Robin Sherwood was himself again, and he soon found himself once more a guest on board the freebooter's vessel, though she no longer was tortured out of all beauty by her disguise as the Peggy Younglove.

There was evidence upon all sides that the schooner and her crew had suffered heavily by the fire of the brig; but the men were rapidly putting things to rights again, and half an hour after the two vessels set sail for New York, Corinne almost happy in her new quarters, and Carroll Gray equally so in having her his guest.

When the Sea Wizard and her prize hove in sight of the Sandy Hook Light, it was near midnight, and turning to Robin Sherwood, who stood by his side upon the deck, Carroll Gray said:

"Captain Sherwood, I have a favor to ask of you."

"Name it, Gray, and I will grant it," was the frank reply.

That it was something of an important char-

acter was certain, for Carroll Gray paced to and fro the deck several times, before he stopped in front of Robin Sherwood to ask the favor, which he had already been told would be granted.

#### CHAPTER XXXV.

##### CARROL GRAY'S SCHEME.

"WELL, Gray, what is the favor you have to ask of me?" said Captain Sherwood, as he saw that the young freebooter hesitated in coming to the point.

"I will tell you frankly," began Carroll Gray.

"I have business to call me to New York, and it was my intention to have gone there before this; but I set sail to hunt down Vesper the Pirate, and I am happy in having been successful.

"As I was to appear in the city without disguise, I had arranged to go there in a small schooner which I have awaiting me, and with a crew of hardly half my present force, and it was my intention to carry out, should inquiry be made, the idea I gave Colonel Bertie Grayson about myself."

"Ah, yes; that you were a member of a cruising club known as the Ocean Wave Club."

"Yes; for no one, excepting yourself can contradict this."

"Do not misunderstand me to say that I wish you to be my sponsor as a gentleman, for I do not; and I will not impose upon your goodness, because I happen to have served you."

"I know well what I am, and this new move on my part is merely the first step to break off with the past, and become a changed man."

"Thank God, I hear you say those words, Gray."

"You are a noble fellow, true as steel, and with an honest heart, and how you have cast the laws of the land to the winds, I cannot see."

"But I seek not to ferret out your past, or the causes that drove you to—"

"Piracy," said Carroll Gray, bitterly.

"You are hardly a pirate, from all I know of you."

"I am, or have been a free rover, and circumstances I could not control made me such."

"But that we'll not discuss now, for I intend to sink the past so deep that it can never rise again."

"Do so, and I'll take you by the hand with more than pleasure, and welcome you into the ranks of men you should be among."

"Knowing, as I do, that you have destroyed the two vessels of Vesper, the Pirate, I can secure for you a lieutenancy in the navy, and a secret pardon from the President."

"No, no; I do not ask it, Captain Sherwood; but I do ask you to tell a slightly different story from the real facts of the case, in regard to the capture of Vesper's brig."

"I will anchor the brig in the Horse Shoe tonight, and then go on with my vessel to where the schooner I spoke of lies hidden."

"I will return with her, and sail up to the city, with yourself and sister on board as my guests, and all I ask is that you give out that Carroll Gray of the Ocean Wave Club, captured the pirate and rescued you, which will be true, and say nothing about the vessel."

"Is your schooner armed, Gray?"

"Yes."

"But why this change of vessels?"

"The three-master is too well known as the Sea Wizard to go up to the city in her, and, as I told you, I wish to remain there for a short while."

"The brig I surrender to you, with the pirate prisoners on board and all."

"No, no, Gray, I cannot take your prize from you."

"You must accept her from me for the Government."

"But my sister?"

"Ah! there I must ask you to plead for me."

"Tell her not to speak of my other vessel to any one, and that I have good reasons for making the change to the little Flying Arrow."

"She may think it mysterious, but never mind, only ask her to say nothing that will get me into trouble."

"Corinne will do so, I feel."

"She knows you as Captain Carroll Gray, of the Ocean Wave Club, only, and so remain to her."

"But you will be lionized once you reach this city, Gray."

"No, I shall remain to myself, wholly, and when I have completed the duty that takes me there, I shall depart."

"And never return to free-roving again?"

"Never!"

"Your hand on that, Gray."

The young freebooter grasped the outstretched hand, and then said:

"See! we are rounding the Hook, and if you will call your sister, I will take you on board the brig to await my return with the schooner."

The brig was only a cable's length astern of the schooner, and half an hour after the two vessels lay side by side, and the transfer was quickly made. The brig then rode by a single anchor, while the Sea Wizard glided up the

Shrewsbury, and soon disappeared from the sight of Robin Sherwood and his sister, who were watching her.

In a few words Sherwood told his sister the request of the young freebooter, and at once she promised to do as he wished, yet her woman's nature got the best of her in the question:

"But why all this mystery, brother?"

"You will know some time, Corinne, but now all we have to say will be that we were rescued by Captain Gray, and leave people to surmise that it was with the little schooner which he has now gone after."

"Of course, if asked about the vessel and crew, you, as a young girl, are expected to know nothing on that subject."

Corinne promised, and the two paced the deck until Jean Oudry, who was in charge of the brig with twenty men, suddenly said:

"There comes the schooner!"

A vessel was now visible coming out of the mouth of the Shrewsbury, and soon after there glided alongside of the brig a little craft of about a hundred and forty tons, and a beauty she was in model and rig, with raking masts, and a large spread of canvas that gave her a most rakish and saucy appearance.

Springing on board of the brig, Carroll Gray greeted his guests, and soon they were all in the elegant cabin of the little schooner, and the two vessels were heading for New York, where they dropped anchor two hours after opposite the Sherwood mansion, in which glimmered a solitary light, as though to welcome the wanderers back.

But why need I dwell upon the scene that followed, the meeting between the mother and her offspring, whom she had begun to look upon as forever lost to her, for every vessel that had sailed out of New York in chase of the pirate had put back without success, and that very day Lieutenant Lonsdale was to sail in the Quick-step to renew the search, for the brig-of-war had been repaired and made thoroughly ready for sea.

Learning of this fact from his mother, Robin Sherwood hastily dispatched a messenger for his lieutenant, with orders to bring a prize crew with him and upon his arrival, just at dawn, the pirate brig was surrendered by the young freebooter, and Midshipman Park Pelham and twenty men were put on board.

Returning on board of his schooner, Carroll Gray ran to an obscure anchorage, where he intended to remain during his stay in the harbor; but before the sun had been very long above the eastern horizon, the news of the return of Sherwood and his sister, and the capture of the pirate brig, had gone like wild-fire through the city, and all were anxious to see the wealthy Southern planter, cruising in his own armed yacht for pleasure, who it was said had been the hero to run down the famous buccaneer.

But the little schooner lay quietly at her anchorage, and her handsome young commander kept himself out of sight; for notoriety at that time was just what Carroll Gray wished to avoid.

#### CHAPTER XXXVI.

##### COLONEL GRAYSON BECOMES JEALOUS.

DURING the absence of Sherwood and his sister, and when their fate was unknown, and the worst was feared, Colonel Bertie Grayson had been the devoted friend of the poor mother.

His face showed that he too suffered, but he did all in his power to give consolation to the one who had son and daughter both to mourn for.

He held out hope that all would come well, and, at his own expense, it was said, was fitting out a vessel especially to search for Vesper, the Pirate, and wreak a fearful revenge upon him, for fishermen who had seen the brig anchored in Sandy Hook had reported it to be the craft of that noted buccaneer.

Celeste Cerrars also passed her days at the Sherwood mansion, and the trio of mourners were wont to plot and plan, hope and despair together, as the days went by and the captives did not return, and no news came from the pirate demanding ransom.

Colonel Grayson was a late riser, for he was also a late sitter-up, so that he was considerably startled the morning of the return of the captives, to have Bunco, his valet, inform him that there was a messenger in hot haste from Mrs. Sherwood demanding to see him.

"What time is it, Bunco?" yawningly asked the sleepy colonel.

"Eight o'clock, sir."

"Ah! two hours before my time of awaking; but show him in."

"The rooms of the colonel were furnished with a luxury that was princely, and an air of comfort that was the personification of laziness.

And into his sleeping-chamber, where no sound from without could intrude, was ushered Bailey, the butler of the Sherwood mansion.

"Well, Bailey, is your mistress ill?" asked the colonel.

"No, sir, but she is happy, for Master Robin and Miss Corinne are back again."

With a bound the colonel was out of bed.

"Tell me about it," he cried, eagerly.

"Well, sir, they came back before dawn, and were brought home by the young gentleman who saved Miss Corinne from the kidnappers before."

The colonel smothered between his teeth something very like an oath, and asked:

"How did he bring them back?"

"In his schooner, sir, and he brought the pirate vessel too, for he captured it, and swung up the chief."

Another smothered oath, and the muttered words:

"Now I will have to kill him, or I will lose Corinne sure."

But aloud he said:

"Well, Bailey, I am overcome with joy, and say to Mrs. Sherwood that I will come around at once."

The colonel, however, dressed most leisurely, took his coffee, for he had no appetite for breakfast at that, to him, early hour, and went around to the Sherwood mansion.

Mrs. Sherwood, the captain, and Celeste Cerrras he saw, but Corinne begged to be excused, as she was very much fatigued.

From Captain Sherwood the colonel heard the story of the capture, the cruise on the pirate vessel, his narrow escape from death by the coming of the Magic Ship, his second escape by the sighting of Captain Carrol Gray in chase, and then the return home.

"I must look up this young hero, Sherwood, and give him my unstinted thanks."

"I regret now that I did not ask you to take me with you upon your sail that day as you passed my yacht; but what on earth took you down to the Lower Bay?"

"I ran down there to thank those who were kind to me when I was cast ashore, and, upon our return, the pirate captured us."

"Had it not been for that noble fellow, Gray, I would now be dead, and God knows what would have become of poor Corinne."

"I cannot hear of any club of the name of the one he says he is a member of among the New England States," said the colonel.

"You looked the matter up then, Grayson?" said Captain Sherwood, with something like a sneer.

But he added quickly:

"He does not claim to be a New Englander, I believe."

"No, I believe that Corinne told me he was a wealthy Southern planter, who cruised for pleasure," said Mrs. Sherwood.

"He may be, but there are so many adventurers nowadays, that it is best to be very careful."

"My dear colonel, when a man stands with a noose around his neck and beneath the shadow of the yard-arm, and his sister is threatened with a worse fate, it is mincing matters very fine to ask one who comes to their rescue if he has a certificate of birth and baptism in his pocket," said Sherwood, somewhat warmly.

"True, and I meant nothing against your friend, my dear Sherwood; only he seems to be always happening in at the right time, when your sweet sister needs rescuing."

"Thank God he did happen in," ejaculated Captain Sherwood.

"Well, when will you call upon him with me that I may add my thanks to the large quota he will receive?"

Captain Gray informed me that he had to remain a short while in the city on private business, and would receive no visitors, and more, even refused to visit us here, as he would be constantly engaged was his plea."

"He is a most mysterious personage indeed," said the colonel, in his sarcastic way.

"Now, Colonel Bertie, I have heard that same remark made about you," said Celeste Cerrras, with one of her sweetest smiles, and not wishing to bring the young lady and the colonel to swords'-points, Robin Sherwood invited him up to his rooms for a chat.

After half an hour of conversation with Sherwood the colonel took his departure, and at once wended his way in the direction of the anchorage of the Flying Arrow.

There was no difficulty in finding the vessel, in spite of her obscure anchorage, for crowds were wending their way to the river-bank to have a look at the famous craft, and one and all comments upon her were most favorable.

A number of boats had gone out to her, but an officer pacing the quarter-deck had ordered them off, and no one had been allowed to board her.

Taking his own boat, the colonel pulled for the schooner.

He had gone in state, with his coxswain and four oarsmen, and the officer upon the deck of the Flying Arrow had permitted him to approach to the side.

"I would like to see Captain Gray, sir, upon whom I have called to pay my respects," said the colonel, in his courtly way.

"I am sorry the captain is not aboard ship, sir; but he went ashore just after breakfast."

"Will you leave your name?" answered Jean Oudry, who was the officer in charge of the schooner.

"Colonel Bertie Grayson, sir; and please say

to Captain Gray that my quarters are at The Cross Swords, in Fulton street, where I will be delighted to have him call."

The colonel then started to depart, but checking his oarsmen said:

"Would it be asking too much, sir, to look over your beautiful vessel?"

"I am sorry, sir, but the orders of Captain Gray are peremptory, not to allow any one on board."

The colonel bowed, but showed his disappointment in his stern, short order to his men:

"Give way!"

Back to the city started the boat, but descrying in the distance the brig-of-war Quickstep, and near her the captured pirate vessel, Colonel Grayson pulled in that direction.

He had met Lucas Lonsdale often at the Sherwood mansion, and in fact the two gentlemen had dined each other on several occasions, so he was sure of a good welcome in that quarter.

Lonsdale was on board the pirate brig, and thither the colonel went.

"Well, colonel, this is a grand capture, is it not?" cried the lieutenant, meeting him at the gangway.

"It is, indeed, Lonsdale, and happy am I that Sherwood and his sister are safe."

"Why, the lads went wild over the news, colonel, for the captain is dearly loved by all, and it was their desire to at once drag the prisoners out and swing them to the yard-arm."

"How many prisoners are there?"

"Forty-one, including wounded."

"It could not have been a very hard fight."

"It was a most desperate one, the prisoners say, for they lost more than half their number."

"The schooner shows no traces of recent action," said the colonel.

"It does not take long, colonel, to put things to rights aboard a well-regulated craft after an action or storm; but the strangest thing is that some of the prisoners really thought they were captured by the famous rover, Sea Wizard."

"Indeed?" and the colonel arched his handsome brows.

"Yes, is it not strange?"

"It is certainly so; but have you seen Gray?"

"Only in the transfer of the prize which he turned over to Captain Sherwood for the Government, without claiming aught for himself and crew, and really he seems to wish to shirk the credit of his exploit."

"He seems to be a dashing young fellow, and should be in the navy, where he would soon make his mark."

"No one seems to know anything about him, or of his antecedents."

"No one cares to know, colonel, for when a man does what he has, his actions speak for themselves; but you are not going?"

"Yes, I wish to take a little run down the bay," and the colonel departed, and said to his coxswain:

"Steer for the Sea Feather!"

To himself he said:

"There is a mystery about that fellow, Gray, which I will clear up."

"I am confident he is not what he represents himself, and if he is not, I shall expose and disgrace him."

"If he is all right, then I must kill him, for he'll steal Corinne Sherwood from me, or I am no judge of woman nature."

"It is war between us, and I must be the victor at all costs."

#### CHAPTER XXXVII.

##### CARROL GRAY MAKES TWO VISITS.

WHEN Captain Carrol Gray left his schooner, it was ten minutes after her dropping anchor, and he went alone in a light skiff belonging to the craft, and which spread a large amount of canvas for a boat so small.

It was something of the build of the surf-skiff, that belonged to the Lily of the Light-house, only longer.

Like an arrow from the bow it sped away, and its course was down the harbor.

The wind was fresh, and the boat shot along at a pace that won the admiration of those upon the vessels anchored about the harbor, and within two hours' time its keel grated upon the beach near the light-house.

As the young freebooter sprung ashore he was met by Lily, who had spied his boat, and soon after recognized him.

"Lil, you look pale and haggard," he said, kindly, as she greeted him.

"Oh, Carrol, we are so glad to see you back, and do hope you bring us news of Captain Sherwood."

"And his sweet sister," suggested the sailor, with a smile.

"Yes, and his sister, I meant, of course," said Lily, with a flushed face.

"They are safe."

"Thank Heaven!"

"At home."

"And you saved them, Carrol?"

"The Sea Wizard did, Lil."

She threw her arms about his neck and kissed him, the first time she had ever done so, while she cried:

"You dear, noble fellow! But tell me of it."

He told her the story as it was, and that his schooner, the Flying Arrow, was then lying at anchor off the city.

"And you came straight down to see me, Carrol?"

"Yes."

"It was very good of you," she said, and yet her tone and manner were sad.

"Yes, I came to see you, Lil, and one other."

"Mother."

"Of course I would not miss seeing her, Lily; but the other I meant was the Hermit of the Highlands."

"I saw him yesterday, and he was fretting about you."

"About the gold I had with me, I guess; but, Lily, I have something to say to you."

"Yes."

"It is something that gives me deep pain to have to say it, but my duty is to you and to myself, and hence I tell you."

"Why, Carrol, what can it be?" she asked, her face paling.

"At yonder cabin on the Highlands I met you two years ago, when you were nursing my grandfather."

"Yes, Carrol."

"From his ravings, when he was ill with fever, you discovered just who he was, and that I was a free rover."

"I did."

"Yet you did not betray him, or myself, and more, when I told you that I loved you, you gave me hope that some day you would be my wife, and I promised that, as soon as I could, I would give up my wild life, and we would go elsewhere and be happy, taking your mother with us."

"Yes, Carrol," and she breathed hard, as though in mental and bodily anguish.

"But, Lil, I am not one to tell you now that I love you, when such is not the case."

She looked into his eyes with an expression which he could not understand, while she clutched his hand nervously.

"Do not misunderstand me, Lil, for I do love you; but it is not as I would wish to love my wife, but as I would love a pure and beautiful sister."

"Carrol, Heaven thank you for those words, for I feel the same toward you," and she burst into tears.

He stood in silence until she became calm, and then continued:

"Now, Lil, remember that I am your lover no longer, but your brother, and let no shadow fall between us."

"None shall, Carrol, and I frankly confess that I am far happier now."

"You may still be happier one of these days, Lil, and I hope that you will."

"Now come, for I must see your mother and then go over and call upon grandfather."

They went hand in hand to the light-house cottage, and ten minutes after the young sailor came out and springing into his boat headed for the Highland beach.

His coming had been seen by the old Hermit, who had been most watchful of late, and he met him upon the sands.

"Welcome, my son, welcome! but have you lost your vessel?" and the eager face showed how anxious the old pirate miser was about his gold.

"No, and on the contrary I have captured the Pirate Vesper."

"He! he! ha! ha!" and the Hermit fairly danced with joy.

"These jewels, sir, are your share, and I paid my men their share for the prize; but the vessel and all else I surrendered to Captain Sherwood for the United States Government."

He handed the Hermit a bag of precious stones as he spoke, and they were clutched with rapturous eagerness and hastily glanced at.

"They are rare and costly, my son, but you were foolish to give up the vessel and the rest of the treasure."

"That I am the best judge of, sir."

"I have claimed little booty as the captain of a pirate, since I have commanded your vessels, and the brig and what was in her I took as my share."

"You had the right, boy; but you are too generous."

"And you too unutterably mean; but pardon me, for I do not care to quarrel with gray hairs."

"The Sea Wizard lies hidden in the inlet with half her crew on board, and I ran up to the city in the Arrow last night and anchored there."

"In her hold is the booty for your agent, and I will deliver it to him in person. Tell me who he is."

"Boy, that I cannot do, for it is a secret."

"Why should it be kept from the commander of the very vessel that gains for him his spoils?"

"He does not even know who you are, or anything about you."

"All he knows is that I command a fleet, armed vessel, known as the Sea Wizard, and that he gets the spoils of her piracy."

"How do you communicate with him?"

"Since the death of Leon Soto, through a boy."

"A boy?"

"Well, through Lily of the Light-house, dis-

guised as a boy, for I believe you know that secret anyhow."

"Oh, yes," said Carrol Gray, but he meant:

"Oh, no!" for he did not even suspect such a thing.

His face, however, did not betray as much, and he said:

"Yes, Lil goes up and tells him when there is booty here, and he runs down in a craft for it?"

"Yes."

"Well, I have it all on board the schooner now."

"Under these circumstances you may as well deal with him directly."

"It will save trouble."

"Very well; you will find his name and address here, for I just wrote this letter to send to him by Lily, whom I was about to signal to run over here, when I saw you coming."

Carrol Gray glanced casually at the address upon the letter, which was sealed, and then thrust it into his pocket.

"Do not lose that letter, for Heaven's sake, boy," anxiously said the old Hermit.

"I will be careful of it."

"Now, sir, I must return, for I have work ahead of me."

"Be very cautious, boy, not to get my agent into trouble, or bring suspicion upon him."

"I will be, grandfather."

"Good-by, and expect to see me soon again."

"You will start out again on a cruise, my son, as soon as the vessel is repaired, I hope?"

"Yes, a short one; so please send that arch-villain of yours, Anchor Tom, over to the inlet daily to hasten the men with their work."

So saying, Carrol Gray returned to his boat, and headed back for the city, a strange look upon his handsome face, for he had become the possessor of a most valuable secret.

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

##### THE INVITATION.

A WEEK passed away after the return of Robin Sherwood and his sister, and their escape was still the talk of the town, while the modest young hero, who kept himself securely out of reach of the lion-hunters of society, was considered an enigma whom no one could solve.

Mrs. Sherwood seemed really hurt that he persistently refused all invitations to dine at her home, or even to visit there, and the grand entertainment, given in honor of the return of her children, was not graced with the presence of the young captain who had saved them.

One evening Colonel Bertie Grayson had just returned to his rooms from the Sherwoods, and a moment after, as he sat down to his late supper, a visitor was announced by Bunco.

"Who is he, Bunco?"

"The hero, sir."

"What hero?" fretfully asked the colonel.

Bunco pitied his master's ignorance, and responded:

"Captain Carrol Gray, of course, sir."

"Show him in, by all means."

And in walked Carrol Gray, smiling, handsome, and attired in a handsome uniform, but without the name of his vessel upon the band of his tarpaulin.

"My dear Captain Gray, you are most welcome."

"Half a dozen times have I done myself the honor of calling upon you at your schooner, but found you absent, and I appreciate your visit."

"Be seated, sir, and join me in a glass of wine."

"I have been very busy, my dear colonel, since my coming to the city, and have held aloof from visitors; but now I will have more leisure, and as I intend making a run of a day to try a new vessel, I called to beg you to be one of the party, for Captain Sherwood, his mother, sister and Miss Cerras will be my guests, with perhaps one or two more."

"It will delight me exceedingly to form one of your guests, Captain Gray, and then I must claim you for a cruise in return upon my little vessel."

"When do you start?"

"To-morrow evening, sir, after sunset, as the night will be moonlight."

"A night excursion, then?"

"We will start by night, sir, and perhaps cruise around Long Island."

A few more minutes of conversation followed, and then Carrol Gray arose to go, the colonel promising to join him at the Sherwoods the following evening.

From the Cross Swords, where the colonel roomed, Captain Gray went to the Sherwood mansion.

Bailey bent himself double upon seeing him, and he was ushered into the parlor, just as the family were about to separate for the night.

But, though surprised at his visit, Robin Sherwood gave him a kindly greeting, and the young captain, in fact, had a warm welcome from all.

"You have been a sad truant, Captain Gray," said Mrs. Sherwood, reproachfully.

"I beg many pardons, Mrs. Sherwood, but I have not been my own master of late; but now, as I have a few days' leisure, I came to beg that

you all honor me with your company for a cruise upon a new vessel I wish to try in a run around Long Island."

Robin Sherwood caught a look in the eyes of the young freebooter urging him to accept, as he understood it, and he said:

"Why, that would be charming."

"You may ask your lieutenant, Captain Sherwood, to form one of the party, and I just left Colonel Grayson at his rooms, and he promised to go with us."

"I so dread the sea," said Mrs. Sherwood.

But her scruples were overruled, and she promised to go, and the young captain departed, followed to the door by Robin Sherwood, who had a short conversation with him there before he took his leave of him.

#### CHAPTER XXXIX.

##### THE CRUISE.

"I MUST run in here for other guests," said Carrol Gray, as he stood on the deck of his vessel with Robin Sherwood, the others of the party being in the cabin.

The "new vessel," as Carrol had called it, happened to be the Sea Wizard under a two-masted schooner rig, and fitted up thoroughly for the cruise.

The place where she dropped anchor, to await the coming of other guests, was under the very shadow of the Highlands.

The vessel had not long to wait, for a boat put off soon after from the shore, and in it were three occupants.

It ran alongside of the schooner's bows, and those in it boarded, and at once the Sea Wizard stood out to sea.

The moon shone brilliantly, the sea was stirred only by a light breeze, and the light-house shed forth its kindly light as the fleet craft rounded the Hook.

To the surprise of Sherwood the new guests did not come aft; but before he could comment upon the rather strange circumstance, Carrol Gray remarked:

"Now, Captain Sherwood, I wish you to call all our friends upon deck, for I have something to show them."

The party came upon deck, Robin Sherwood more surprised than he would admit at the mysterious manner of Carrol Gray, and instantly the young freebooter said:

"My friends, I am anxious to show you how quickly and thoroughly a well-disciplined crew can turn a vessel inside out."

"All hands ahoy to rig ship!" he shouted in ringing tones.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"What rig?" answered Jean Oudry.

"Full rig," was the response.

A hundred men quickly sprung to their posts on deck and rigging, and to the wonder of all a mizzen-mast was suddenly brought aft and stepped with a celerity and skill that was wonderful.

Then a mizzen-royal was sent up, while the fore and aft rig forward came down, seeming to melt away.

Then up went top-gallant sails, topsails and cross-jack courses.

A moment later upon the mainmast were set royal top-gallant sails, topsail and mainsail, and then the foremast passed through the same startling metamorphosis, while canvas covers were placed over the hull and masts, and, disappearing in squads of twenty at a time, the seamen almost instantly reappeared in white costumes.

"Specter light ho!" shouted Carrol Gray, who had also changed his uniform to a white one, and instantly the vessel became enveloped in a weird, greenish, misty light, thrown from lanterns with colored glass, from different parts of the hull.

Springing into the mizzen shrouds the young freebooter captain cried in tones that rung piteously:

"Ho, the brig, ahoy! for God's sake pilot us to port, for we are lost! lost! lost!"

"The Magic Ship!" shouted Captain Sherwood, and turning to the young freebooter, as he sprung back upon the deck, where all stood gazing upon him with pale faces, he said:

"For God's sake, Gray, what does this all mean?"

"Come into the cabin, my friends, and I will tell you," was the cold reply.

There, in a few words, the young freebooter told his story, as the reader heard him go over his past in the Hermit's cabin, and then he continued:

"Now I have to say that upon the Highlands dwells my grandfather, an exiled noble of England, who took to piracy."

"His son marrying against his will, he drove that son to piracy too, and had me stolen from my mother when I was but an infant."

"That mother died of a broken heart, while her husband swept the seas as a pirate, and a strange fate made me one of my father's crew, though little did either of us know who the other was then."

"That father, an adventurer, stands before you now in the person of Colonel Bertie Grayson,

and there is his father, my grandfather, known as the Hermit of the Highlands."

"That girl, Celeste Cerras, is the daughter of Bertie Gray, for such is his name, for he married a second time, and the adventurer, my father, and the adventuress, my half-sister, sought to drag down your son and daughter, Mrs. Sherwood, to infamy, for though the niece of poor Commodore Carr, she is not worth a dollar, excepting what her father, the agent for selling piratical booty, gives to her."

"Of what I say I have proof, for here is Lily of the Light-house, to whom the old Hermit, in his delirium, told the whole story."

"Now, my friends, I have no more to say, other than that I was a pirate because I could not help myself, and I fitted up this trick craft simply to aid me in escaping the cruisers sent after me."

"From to-night I lead a different life, and all I ask is that those three, that old man, his son, and Celeste Gray be allowed to go their way in life, so long as they leave the land of America."

What was the amazement of all at this straightforward and startling story, the reader may well understand, and when the prow of the beautiful vessel was turned back to New York, it was determined that the Hermit, his son and Celeste, should take the Sea Feather, with what crew was necessary to man her, and set sail at once, never to return under penalty of imprisonment or death, for their crimes.

#### CHAPTER XL.

##### CONCLUSION.

AGAIN did the Sea Wizard, or rather the Magic Ship, drop anchor off the Sherwood mansion, and those on board went ashore, excepting the Hermit and his wicked son and granddaughter.

They went on board the Sea Feather, which at once set sail, and as she was never heard of more, rumor said she perished in a fearful storm that caught her soon after she gained the open sea.

The Flying Arrow was surrendered by Carrol Gray to Captain Sherwood, while the Magic Ship, and a good crew, he retained to run as a packet-vessel between New Orleans and New York.

But he was not many days engaged in this traffic, for, forgetting what he had been, and loving him for himself alone, Corinne Sherwood became his wife, upon the very day that Captain Robin Sherwood led as a bride to the altar the Lily of the Light-house, who had so well kept the secrets of the Freebooters of Sandy Hook.

THE END.

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